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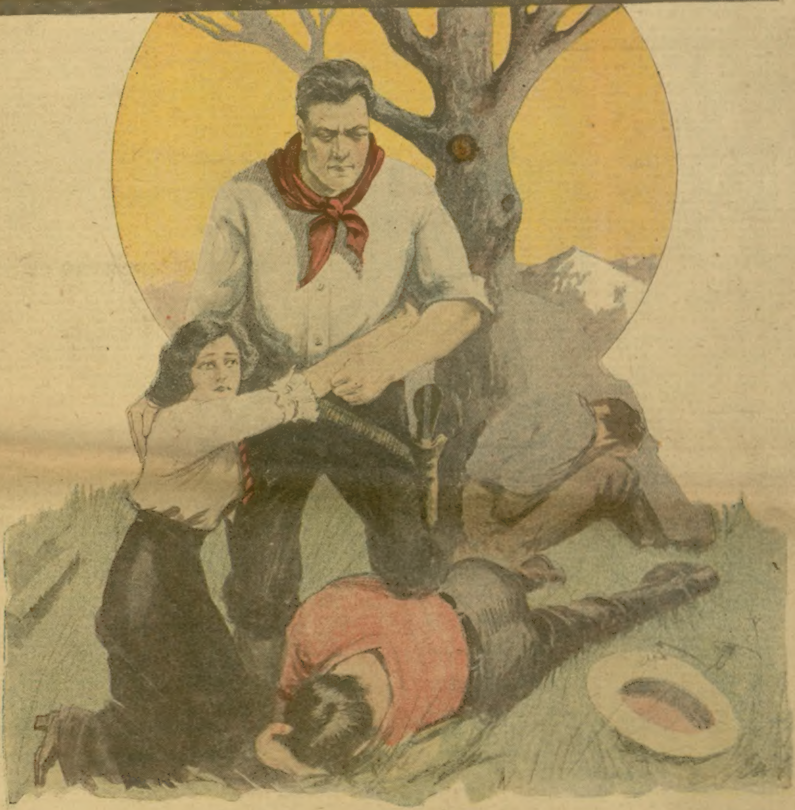

The Film Impostor

Or, Starring in the Dark

By P. G. Estee

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CHAPTER I.

THE shabby young man standing in the open outer lobby of the moving-picture theater drew his thinly clad body into as small a space as possible, that he might not be ordered out and again have to face the icy knife of a January gale.

Many people were passing, and of these some eyed him with patent disfavor, others with commiseration; quite often expressions of both disfavor and sympathy would be replaced by knowing smiles and cheerful winks. Some of the men punched him playfully as they passed, and addressed remarks meaningless in the ears of the young man.

"Even a perverted sense of humor ought not to make them see anything funny in the appearance of a half-starved man, who has tasted no food for two days," muttered the shabby one, rubbing his hand over gaunt cheeks and critically inspecting his worn and ragged clothing. "I'm a good joke, it seems; but why?"

For just a moment the half-humorous twist of the lips was gone, and the eyes with their whimsical glint were closed tight. Perhaps he feared that weakness might force an unmanly exhibition. Pride came quickly to his rescue, but in the brief interval two people had stopped close beside him, and as he opened his eyes and forced a defiant smile the two were just entering the theater door. An elderly, soberly clad lady and a young girl, who turned for a backward glance, and in the bright hazel eyes which met his the young man read both sympathy and understanding.

"Gee, mister! Don't wonder you make 'em come in with a little old thousand every week! Stunts like this!"

A small newsboy had stopped in the lobby and was gazing admiringly at the shabby man. "Saw you in that three-reeler few nights ago," he continued. "You certainly are the make-up gent. I'm gonna see that five-reeler; they say you're dandy as the hobo."

"Thanking you sincerely," said the young man, with a low bow, "but just who am I supposed to be?" The whimsical eyes were smiling again and the newsboy grinned.

"You can't fool a fan like me, Alec. So long; got to hustle."

"Now, who am I supposed to be, Alonzo?" said the man, addressing himself. "Whoever he is, he's a mighty popular chap. They all seem to mean this glad-hand stuff."

He turned to a three-sheet poster of the evening's show, in a corner of which was a "close-up" of the star, taken as he was to appear in the garb of a Western miner.

Had the shabby one removed his battered hat, an observer would have commented upon the same abundance of curly brown hair, the same dark blue eyes, and the firm, out-thrust chin with the half-humorous twist of the lips.

"General resemblance," remarked the young man. "Alonzo, we were more like that two months ago; anyway, we could have shown a better muscled pair of arms. Not right now, however. Ah! Here's another bill. The hobo and I do have a good deal in common, so far as looks go." He shook himself impatiently and tried to keep his teeth from chattering. "They say Alex Handerston really does receive four hundred per week. A job with four bits at the end would look good to me just this moment. One kind as hard to get as the other in Chicago—in January!"

He withdrew his shaking form farther into the corner toward the door leading into the warm interior, to which he turned longing eyes. A dandified little man lounging by stopped abruptly and came toward him with outstretched hand.

"Well done, Samuels," applauded the newcomer. "This side business of yours is great. Good money in it for you, too? What? By the way," and his voice sank low, "When is your time up with his highness?"

A sense of humor is a gift of the gods and one that only a favored few may possess. The young man was evidently one of the few, for now, half-starved tho he was, the impulse to meet the little man halfway in his joke was too strong to resist. He matched the other's tone and smile.

"In just thirty minutes I will be without a place," he stated. To himself he added that the first show would then be over and the manager was most likely to request him to move on.

"Is that right, Samuels?" gasped the stranger, his bright black eyes snapping with excitement. "You don't mean it? Why, man alive, my lucky dollar fell on the floor tonight, but I never thought of anything as good as this. Just saw you and stopped to say 'hello.' Samuels, we need you. Whadda say to five hundred per week, no questions asked or answered?"

The shabby one stared. It was surely time for the joke to end. "What do I say? Give me an advance payment, and I will go down to the Strikland and make the head waiter parade the aisle on his head while I eat thru the menu, twice."

The little man grinned. "As if advances worried you at any time. Bills sticking out of your pockets even now." He reached forward and drew a folded bill from the pocket of the shabby coat. The outcast felt a warm glow. The girl with the hazel eyes had been practical in her sympathy. The other recalled his wandering thoughts by thrusting at him a thick roll of bills.

"Here's three hundred. Be in Spokane by Saturday noon, sure. Work that'll suit you. I'll be there ahead. Keep all this secret until we get stuff ready after first job. Do we get you for keeps at that figure?"

"Figure is good as long as we suit each other. I never sign contracts," said the young man, imperturbably.

"Well, we'll agree. No doubt of that. Show up. Here's the new address." He penciled some words on a card, shook hands, and was gone, muttering something of a forgotten date.

The shabby young man, who had addressed himself as Alonzo, thrust the card in his pocket, and then slowly and carefully bit the corners of the handful of bills.

"Real, spelled r-e-a-l," he said. "Not a dream nor the delirium of hunger. We will now dine, Alonzo. Five hundred per. Wonder what we are to do? Well, we don't care very much. Perhaps we'll draw the line at eating the people we kill, or spending the bill the lady gave us. Outside of that, anything will be all right, will it not, Alonzo?"

The last thought that came to the young man as he sank to sleep that night was a pertinent one. "You're now Samuels, Alonzo Donegan. Samuels! Wonder what said Samuels does when he reaches 611 Sprague avenue, Spokane? What's your first name, Samuels?"

CHAPTER II.

THE Golden Limited, second night out from Chicago, was lurching uncertainly along over North Dakota prairies that lay hidden under great snowdrifts, and thru cuts from which it had been necessary to clear the snow with rotary plows. In the sleeper, Saida, the occupants had reached the point where formality is laid aside for mere humanness, and magazines and gossip were exchanged with mutual pleasure, while the inevitable card games were sociable, almost family affairs.

Alonzo Donegan was aboard the Saida, a Donegan transformed by food, a bath and good clothes. One may do much with these things. Add youth and hope, and the result is indeed a transformation. The young man might have suffered much; might still have wrongs to avenge, but was he not on the way to an adventure, perhaps many adventures? It is good to be young, and also—the girl with the hazel eyes was journeying westward on the Saida. Donegan had seen a little flicker of recognition in those eyes when he passed the girl's seat the first evening, and now he had secured an introduction and knew that she was Roberta Springly, an actress who was leaving a successful career on the legitimate stage and joining the stellar circle of a great moving-picture producing company.

Donegan was thinking of the little actress and in consequence playing a very indifferent hand of five hundred. How was he to thank her for the bill and how explain: or was explanation necessary?

"Tell her the tru[illegible] Alonzo," he thought. "She is as s[illegible] as she is pretty. Darn that ma[illegible]rant!" He had heard the young lady's merry laugh, and knew that it had been caused by some sally of the one person among the Saida's passengers whom he found uncongenial.

However, Donegan was not the only one to be unfavorably impressed by the manner of the big young man, who had, from the first morning, when he opened the pale blue eyes that stared out truculently at every one, seemed to have but one wish, namely, to impress upon all concerned a due sense of the honor conferred upon them because he, Strant, saw fit to travel in the Saida.

The important one had tried to establish friendly relations with the pretty actress, but with small success in his own eyes, altho far too much in the eyes of Donegan. For Donegan's opinion of Miss Springly was correct as to her good sense, even if it did not do her justice as to appearance, for with the delicate beauty of her coloring enhanced by a great mass of dark auburn hair and her expressive hazel eyes she was very charming.

Donegan caught a glimpse of the girl as she came down the aisle chatting with the elderly lady, who was her aunt and constant companion.

"What a pal for another girl—or a man!" he thought, then shook himself impatiently. "Nothing in the sentimental line for yours, Alonzo."

Donegan dined late that night, and afterward paced the little vestibuled space between the sleepers, communing with himself in the way that had become a habit during the weary days and nights of other years, when the wilderness had seemed to close in until he had to hear the sound of a voice or go mad with the loneliness.

"An adventure every evening, Alonzo. Nearly time again. Night before last little man hires us for five hundred per week to do—what? Last night we find card in other sleeper. Reads 611 Sprague, Alonzo; same as our card. Now, who else is the little chap luring with big money? We would like to compare notes with the party."

The vestibule was unlighted except for the broad band of light from each of the car doors, and in his walk Donegan could see portions of the interior of each car. In the rear sleeper, near the front, was a young person to whom his eyes wandered more times than he would have cared to confess. She was a slim, brown-eyed girl, clad in gray, which, with the heavy coils of dark hair gathered low upon her neck, gave one an impression that Donegan slangily described as "hominess," coining the word for the occasion.

Just now the face was sad enough and the eyes full of trouble, but the young man felt that they should be the home of smiles and roguishness. Involuntarily he found himself wishing it were his duty to assist in chasing away the little glooms that seemed to him to be rank usurpers.

Finally he ceased his tramp and stood in one of the darkened corners watching the banks of white flash by. He had decided to return to his car, when the door of the rear sleeper opened, and turning, Donegan saw the gray-clad girl come out. At the same instant, by chance or design, Strant stepped thru the Saida's door. Neither saw Donegan.

With a little cry the girl started to draw back, but Strant's big hand clasped her arm and drew her forward into a corner of the rear car vestibule.

"Thought I had forgotten you, did you?" he growled.

"I hoped you had," said the girl, quietly.

"Now, I want two things," stated the important one. "I want to know where you are keeping that man of yours hidden, and I want you. I get what I want," he added savagely.

"Not this time, John Strant." Donegan, listening shamelessly, caught the little tremulous choke and knew that she was afraid. He waited, his fists clinched.

"You know that he is wanted by officers, and that the man behind them has threatened to kill on sight. He means it. Let me take care of you both, or you may have to tell the law many unpleasant things—unpleasant for yourself and——"

"You mean that you want to get him back in your clutches before he is able to fight you. Take care of yourself. Even a drug fiend can 'come back' and be a man to reckon with."

The man laughed. "Never a chance to reckon with me when they get thru with him," he jeered. "As for you, I know that it took your last cent to get West. If you fail to land that job, how about your living? Do you know that I am in the film game myself and reach the La Paz? I'll buy them if I have to."

"You——" The girl was sobbing, and Donegan started forward as the big man tried to restrain the little figure from slipping back to the car door.

"You big bluff!" he said softly. "Keep your hands off the young lady!"

Strant cursed coarsely, but his hold relaxed, and the gray-clad girl disappeared within. "Now, you!" he gritted, and swung his right for Donegan's face. The latter cleverly evaded, but slipped on the iron of the vestibule trap, and in an instant the other had him in a bear-like, rib-crushing embrace.

Weakened by weeks of illness, followed by other weeks with insufficient food, the younger man was powerless to break that hold. He wondered why the girl had not sent help; wondered why he should not call; tried to call and could not, and then felt that he was breathing his last, for the big hand had crept up to his throat.

"Wish I had your partner where I have you."

At the very last he heard the other man's voice. The words seemed to come from a long distance and to have no particular bearing on the question. He wondered——

"Knew it was all a dream, Alonzo," Donegan muttered dazedly. "Here we are in same old lobby, freezing."

Slowly his senses had rallied from unconsciousness, and then sharply he had come out of the delicious half-stupor with the realization that he was not, after all, in the chilly moving-picture lobby. Instead he was lying nearly buried in a huge snowdrift. To the right was the deep cut of the railroad; beyond that and to the left were unbroken wastes of white.

"Ditched us, Alonzo. Well, what do we care? Nice and warm under snow; let's sleep." The stupor of cold was getting him, when another thought drove him to his feet and sent him plowing his way thru the drift to the track.

What if the brown-eyed girl needed further help against Strant? What if she were quite alone on the Golden Limited and without money? He must overtake the train or get word to some one on it.

It was this thought pounding in his brain that drove Donegan down the track. Drove him reeling with weakness and without overcoat, overshoes or head protection other than the handkerchiefs he requisitioned from his pockets. There was soft snow to the level of the rails, and it made weary going. Then the cold chilled him thru shoes and trousers, and the icy wind nipped at every portion of his head and body. He felt exquisite torture in one hand and then a numbness, and knew that the member was freezing.

"Be our feet next, Alonzo," he told himself. "Lots to do yet. Keep going, ol' pal."

As he plodded on Donegan remembered the words that Strant had muttered.

"Alonzo, he said something about our partner. What does he know, do you suppose?"

He thought how delightful it would be to lie down in the soft white snow, but forced himself to think of the brown-eyed girl and then of the August day when he had found that both partner and fortune were gone. Perhaps the heat of anger which still ran in his blood would help to keep him moving.

Bitter thoughts and plans for vengeance may be allowed a man who has left home half owner of a hundred-thousand-dollar mine, and returns to find the mine mortgaged for full value, and a trusted partner, who was also a trusted friend, gone with the price of the mortgage and many thousands of the firm's ready money.

The mine had been Bluewing, of Bluefield, Arizona, and the partner, Richard Woods. After all bills were settled Donegan had left Bluefield, unable to bear the sight of the mine in alien hands. He began a feverish investigation, and found himself against a wall. So far as he could find his partner had had no bad habits. There were no relatives other than an old aunt, who had heard nothing of the young fellow. The mortgages, held by New York bankers, had been assigned by one Thompson, a curb broker. Detectives found proof that Thompson was in Europe.

Donegan did find that a man, appearing to be a person of some importance and claiming Pittsburgh as his home, had been many times a visitor during the months of his own absence. Davison, the man had called himself, and he had taken options on several mining claims. Efforts to locate Davision or trace a connection with Thompson were fruitless.

Embittered, in poor health, and with his last few hundreds spent in the search, Donegan had planned to earn enough for a new start if he could once reach the West. In Chicago he found himself confronted with a situation where men were plenty and jobs few. He had felt himself lucky to keep alive. Letters to friends of prosperous days had remained unanswered.

Fierce as was his anger, Donegan could not keep his mind away from thoughts of his desperate plight. He seemed to have been walking for hours. Where was a town or farmhouse? There were no lights, no sign of sleigh roads. If it wasn't that he must help some one. Whom was he to help? Why not rest first?

It is quite likely that even his resolute will would have failed had not a sudden roar behind him and a sharp vibration of the rails warned. Donegan had just time to fling himself to the side and stand waist-deep in snow as a locomotive flashed by. In vain he shouted and hurled snow. The freight was a short one, and the caboose was passing when Donegan's least numbed hand came out of his pocket and hurled a handful of silver against the rear window.

Lanterns flashed quick signals and the freight ground to a stop, and then came backing cautiously, men running ahead. Prompt and efficient first aid was rendered to his frozen face and hands, and at the first station he was left in the warm office of a cheerful night operator, who forced upon him the best of his coffee and lunch.

Donegan had insisted that a message be wired ahead of the Golden Limited before he ate or rested, and that message was to Miss Roberta Springly.

As for Strant, let the big man play his hand as he wished. Donegan would not call the law to his aid. There were many things to be considered, and the young man felt primitive instincts when it came to settling his own troubles. He wondered how Strant had accounted for his absence. Would Strant admit that they had fought?

The answer came soon. It was in the form of a message to all trains, warning them that a passenger had fallen from first number one while tampering with vestibule trap and door.

"Report that I am safe and coming on second number one," he told the operator.

"Strant can claim that he left me after a few words, and that I fell—and he can get away with it, too. It's up to us, Alonzo, to see that there is a second time."

Had Strant, sitting in apparent unconcern beside Miss Roberta Springly, been able to have seen the face just then of the man he had hurled into the snow, it is doubtful if he would have rested so secure in the belief that his money was a magic power against which none could contend.

It was Friday noon, just twelve hours behind first number one, when Donegan's train halted in Spokane, and that young man, making haste to secure his belongings from the care of the station master, proceeded to make himself rather more presentable.

"First to locate that little girl, Alonzo, and then for 611 Sprague. We can learn a little of our future friends—or enemies. Tomorrow there would doubtless have been a reception committee for their five-hundred-dollar hobo."

A search of hotels and boarding-houses was in his mind when a thought struck him with the force of a blow. "Of all the plain, ivory-fixtured idiots! Alonzo, we don't know her name. Miss Springly wired that the lady held a ticket to Spokane. Where did she go, and was Strant in the game? Did Miss Springly leave the train here? Perhaps that is why she gave no further details. Let's see."

Impressing a private detective in the service, Donegan made an unavailing search for the auburn-haired actress. Finally, instructing the detective to continue the hunt, and giving him also the description of Strant and the girl of the rear sleeper, Donegan turned to his own affairs for a time.

There was little trouble in locating the number on Sprague, a big stone building with an imposing front. Donegan had halted in the marble-floored lobby to consult the directory of offices when an elevator opened to disgorge its cargo of humans. Among those leaving the car was a dainty feminine figure about which there seemed an elusive familiarity. A thick veil covered the young lady's face, and Donegan could not be sure that it was the girl of the Golden Limited.

He lurched forward and awkwardly enough jostled the girl, and then, as she acknowledged his abject apology, he saw that it was indeed the brown-eyed girl about whom most of his waking thoughts had centered. He saw, too, that she had been weeping. In her hand she held a small card, and involuntarily Donegan read the penciled words, "611 Sprague."

"What is 611 and what have they done to you?" he demanded, his voice hoarse with sudden anger.

"It is the downtown office of the La Paz Film Company," said the girl, surprised into answering this masterful young man.

"What did they do to you?" he repeated.

"Nothing, only refused to use me, after writing that they could give me at least half time."

If 611 was the headquarters of a moving-picture producing company, who and what was he supposed to be?

"Help!" he told the girl. "There's a mighty big mystery about to be unraveled. Perhaps I can do you a good turn with those folks. Then, again, I may have to borrow dinner money. Do you know any one in the movie world called Samuels—just plain Samuels?"

The girl surveyed him with a little twinkle of amusement.

"You know of Alex Handerston, the eccentric star, and his work in out-of-door feature movie plays?"

Donegan nodded. He knew the answer now. Why hadn't he guessed? There was no highly paid, mysterious mission at all. The little man had fallen into the same error as the others the night Donegan had stood freezing in the lobby. Now, how would he help any one?

"Mr. Handerston's own name is Samuels," came the girl's soft voice. "He uses Handerston as a stage name."

"Good Lord!" groaned the young man.

"Whatever does that matter to you?" she asked. "You look horrified."

"Oh, nothing! Nothing at all! Only I was engaged to work for the La Paz by a man I know now to have thought I was the said Samuels. Me," he pounded himself dramatically on the breast. "Me—never mind the grammar—and I never even posed for a dozen different photos."

"There is more than a mere resemblance to Mr. Samuels. Did you ever do any real theatrical or even amateur work on the stage?" was the practical query.

"Lots of the usual amateur stuff. At college and the home circle, you know."

The girl smiled. There was something refreshing and genuine in this young man's half-humorous distress. She did not dream that it meant everything to him. Indeed, she almost forgot her own real troubles.

"Do you want that position so badly?"

"For two reasons," he declared. "If I were the one and only Alex I could help you, and I'd really like to be the artist that man has proved."

"Try it," breathed the girl. "There's magic in the film, you know. Four years ago Handerston was a drunken miner somewhere in Idaho."

"Would it be right?"

"If you can make good; give them what they want on the film, anything will be forgiven. If you cannot—you go anyway. I—I am sure you can make good. Are you doing this for sport or are you——"

"Poor," he finished. "Yes, five days ago I expected to have to beg or steal to keep from starving. I thought this was an opportunity."

"It is; I want you to take it. Not on my account, for I could not take a position after what the director said, but for your own sake."

"What did he say?" demanded Donegan, again belligerent.

"Nothing like that," she said, with a little smile. "Mr. Richardson is a gentleman. However, he has been instructed by his people to explain that certain acts of mine make it necessary to cancel the tentative contract. Those acts were assisting a man who had broken the law. I obeyed a higher law, that of common humanity. Therefore Thea Burling is to be blacklisted wherever the power of one evil man can reach."

"Strant?"

Thea nodded. "He could have me placed in jail before night if he wished—and one dear to me."

Donegan's heart sank. He remembered now Strant's remark about her man, and now she was herself confessing that some man was dear to her. Well, he would play the game if he could help her and the man who was dear.

"If you will take that position when Mr. Richardson proffers it, I will put over the greatest deception of the age. Will you, quick?"

A little flush had come into Thea's cheeks.

"I know you can win if you don't bother with my troubles."

"I like bother," he assured her, with the Donegan smile working overtime. "Say you will take the job."

"Yes, then. I know I can do the work and earn the salary if I can only get the chance."

"You will have it. Give me your address and wait for a word from me. We are both going on the La Paz roll. Did Strant bother you again?"

"Not directly. He has gone East again, and I fear for that other whom I love and Strant hates. He has a double reason urging him."

Before they parted Donegan learned that he had somehow missed one telegram from Roberta Springly telling that she would look after the other girl. Indeed, the warm-hearted little actress had secured good quarters for Thea before continuing her journey.

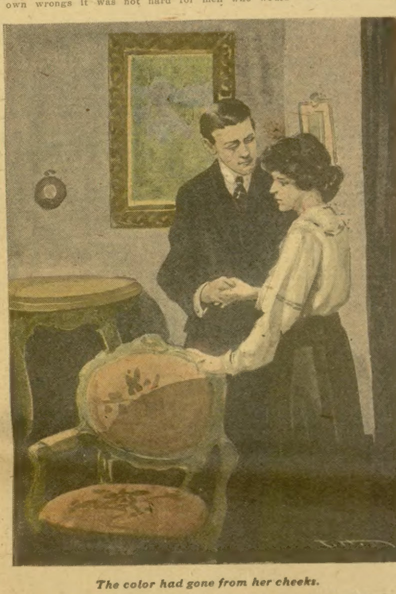
"Welcome to our city, Samuels! Three times welcome, as you are a day early," chattered the little man. "We're too busy to be real sociable, but you understand all that. Here's the scenario that we work on first. Mind you the public will not know until we are ready for release that we have grabbed off the brightest luminary of the Bradford bunch."

Shame for the deception he was now knowingly practicing came to Donegan.

"Mr. Richardson," he began, only to be silenced by the insistent buzz of the telephone.

It was useless to bother, he reflected, but he might as well run thru the scenario. It was certain there would be no place for him as soon as that conversation was finished and he had made his confession.

Donegan began to read, and then sat lost to his surroundings. The story was of two men who attempted to wrest a mine from a coterie of villains, who had tried to steal it, even swaying the law to their nefarious purpose. This was the stuff he knew. Just be himself; wear the clothes he had worn for many years, act as he would act if feeling the emotions of the hero, and as he thought of his own wrongs it was not hard for Donegan to call up those feelings. He read on and on. The director was in and out of the private office; Donegan was not aware of the fact.



The color had gone from her cheeks.

At last he threw down the papers. "We're going to make a great picture, Mr. Director," he said, and the little man sprang to his feet in pleased excitement.

"With you feeling that way," he cried, "we can get busy right away. There's no need of rehearsal for a lot of the out-door stuff. Tomorrow we'll try a little of that natural scenery below Natatorium. There is no one can touch you in the out-of-door, true-to-life stuff, Samuels."

Once more a feeling of guilt prompted Donegan to speak, but a thought of the brown-eyed girl decided him. He would win and she should have her chance.

"If the picture starts good I am going to ask one favor," he smiled. "No, not more money," as the director raised both hands high. "Just a personal favor."

"Start 'The Blue Trophy' right, and you may have anything or anybody you wish. Now go out and see the studio before I give you my own job." There was a little smile about Richardson's lips that Donegan did not observe.

CHAPTER III.

THE studio, Donegan learned, was beyond the Union Park district, far out on Sprague. All in all, he decided that the La Paz people could have found no more ideal spot for a studio than in this same Queen City of the Inland Empire.

Two hours' ride by auto would carry them from the wildest of natural scenery to the most peaceful of farm and fruit ranches, or from lumber and mining operations to the most lonesome and barren wastes of sand and sagebrush for desert backgrounds.

Close enough for all purposes was another ideal film background, the Coeur d'Alene mining district.

It was long past midnight when Donegan, exhausted, flung himself on his bed. He had studied the scenario as he used to study when necessity and a critical faculty decreed that he pass certain standings by a certain time, or view some college baseball battle from the stand rather than from behind the bat. Miss Burling had given him the benefit of her experience and observation; he had devoured every scrap of information to be found in available books and magazines. He must make good.

Not alone now was it a desire to win that he might help Thea Burling; the film magic had got into his blood. He felt that he must make good for the company that had employed him. "The Blue Trophy" must be a great picture, and he must help to make it so. He would not spare himself in work and study. Then the pessimistic side of Donegan laughed and shook its head. The La Paz could get plenty of better men who would work and study—and they would do it for less than five hundred per week.

Fate, or her confidential clerk, had been handing Alonzo Donegan jolts with both hands. Now she veered about and seemed ready to shower kindnesses upon him.

"The Blue Trophy" was peculiarly a "man story," hence the energetic little director's delight at securing the man he supposed to be the eccentric star, Handerston, for his company. The latter was said to be the greatest of his time in that line of screen work. Donegan's appearance, character and training fitted him to take such parts, and fortunately, again, Director Richardson, that next morning, selected for trial scenes which fitted the mood of the young man, who was prepared to try to fill the place of the great star.

The members of the company selected for work that day were to auto to a point on the Spokane River below the great natural park, and later cross the river to the fort and make a few scenes for the story.

Donegan had elected to make his first appearance among the other members of the company while he was in costume, and when he came from his dressing-room to the autos he was in attire natural to him, that of a hard-working mine boss. It was the critical moment. Close personal friends of the star might be among the company.

Fate smiled again as she looked down upon the young man and rummaged among her files. Only one man had ever worked with Handerston; that was McNally, the camera man, and while he expressed surprise, he seemed to have no suspicion that it was not the great Alex himself.

There were half a dozen others on hand; Johnson, a handsome but surly chap, whose grouches were self-starting and long-lasting; Lamb, the "funny" man; his partner, Stanley, and Bracken, Moberly and Harwood, all good men with known reputations. The greetings of Johnson and Harwood lacked cordiality, for each had hoped to play the leading role in the big production.

"Now for the ladies," said Richardson, briskly. "Ladies, allow me to introduce Alex Handerston. If none of you have worked with him, you have all, at least, seen him on the screen. Miss Driman, Miss Brand, Mrs. Davis, and Miss Springly. The latter lady will work with you as Helen in this picture."

Donegan found himself facing a perfect battery of eyes, but he was conscious only of the gaze of a pair of very bright hazel orbs. They belonged to the girl of the Saida. She had worked with Handerston; she knew.

A brief ten seconds that seemed ten hours, and she was smiling cordially. "So glad to meet you again, Mr. Handerston."

Donegan, who had felt the torture of a man sinking for the third time, now felt all the relief of a man being towed to shore and safety.

"If Miss Springly and I are to work together, may I call a taxi and discuss matters as we ride out?"

"Certainly, this is 'get acquainted' day, anyhow. Hurry, tho. What we get, we'll get while the light is good."

"Who and what are you?" demanded Roberta, with perhaps pardonable asperity, as they were whirled down Sprague toward Monroe and the bridge crossing. "First I see you as a wretched tramp, then a casual traveler, and now a movie actor. You are not Handerston."

"I'll tell it all and throw myself on your mercy, and for pity's sake temper it with all the kindness you have in stock. I am going to need it."

Just a little frown gathered on the pretty brow as he told of Thea, then the light of good comradeship came back to the clear eyes.

"It's a good thing for your little plan that my destination was changed to Spokane by a wire from New York. I was going to Seattle and Blanche Marbank coming here. Is it asking too much to inquire if you were really down and out that night; but of course you were not?" she added hastily.

"So down and out," he told her, grimly, "that I was searching garbage cans for frozen potatoes and the like. Some drop from part ownership of the Bluewing mine."

The little actress flashed a quick look at him. "I had a dear friend who wrote me that he was part owner of a mine called by that name. I am afraid I am forgotten now, for I have heard nothing for the longest time." There was genuine sadness in the tone of the usually cheerful young lady.

"Some other Bluewing, I presume. My friend and partner eloped with everything of his own and mine also. Name was Woods," he ended abruptly, sorry that he had spoken of his private troubles.

"Woods? Richard Woods? Do you mean to tell me that Dick Woods is a thief?" The face of Roberta was bloodless and the hazel eyes dark with horror. Donegan read her secret in that brief moment.

"It looks that way," he told her, gently. "There are many things that may be explained some day. Those are the facts as we know them."

"You can never make me believe him a thief, or even think of him doing wrong!" cried the girl. The man listening thought of his former judgment: "What a pal she would make!"

Roberta's next remark showed that her friendship was not only firm but practical and far-seeing for those for whom she cared. "Mr. Donegan, if I assist you in putting over this—this masquerade, are you going to remember that Dick is my friend when an accounting comes—if it ever does?"

For answer he held out his hand.

"Samuels," said the director, crisply, "you as Maxwell, have just found that Harwood, as Davis, has secured an injunction delaying work at the time you must have receipts from your mine in order to save it. Register violent quarrel, then grapple, and after struggle hurl Davis to ground. At that moment you hear Helen calling for help as two of Davis' roughs threaten her. You can only reach Helen by swinging over that deep gulch at the end of the rope you see there. You get momentum with each added swing and finally land at her side and in the nick of time to rout the bullies. Got a cool head?"

"Yes," said Donegan, quietly, and thanked his stars that it was so. The prospect of that swing over the deep gulch was not pleasing to even a strong-nerved man.

"This part is rehearsal, you understand. Take it easy."

The part of the oppressed miner appealed powerfully to the masquerading actor, however, and as the director watched him a surprised gleam came into his eyes.

"Stop," he ordered. "I've changed my mind. Go thru the whole scene. McNally, get this clear thru."

Donegan passed the ordeal of that first scene, the daring swing and rescue of Helen, with flying colors. Even Johnson was inclined to be cordial after viewing his work, and Roberta smiled approvingly as he set her down, after the rescue, and climbed down the gulch side in the face of McNally's camera.

"Keep it up," she whispered, "Keep

(Continued on Page 9.)

Beatrice Farnham's Rescue

Or, Beyond the Mexican Border - By Charles Haven Liebe

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CHAPTER V.

OLD ELLIS FORD'S business in Fort Worth demanded his presence there but a few hours. However, he might have remained in the city for a day or so, had not relations along the borderland become yet more strained by the sudden shooting up of Columbus, New Mexico, by Francisco Villa and his men. As soon as old Ford stepped from the train, his ears caught the cry of a newsboy telling something of the trouble at Columbus. He bought a paper and quickly acquainted himself with the particulars of the outrage.

"I wonder if that will wake Uncle Samuel!" he said to himself.

When his business in Fort Worth was transacted, he hastened back to the railway station, bought his passage, and boarded a southbound train for home.

His foreman came out to meet him when his buckboard drew up before the ranch-house, and the look of gravity in Billy Weaver's eyes told old Ford that he was about to hear news that would affect him even more than the news of the Columbus outrage had affected him.

"Well, tell it, Billy!" he clipped, springing from the buckboard with the alacrity of a boy.

"I'll begin at the beginning," said Weaver. "The Kid got hold of a stray message from an American girl who seems to be in a bad fix down at Santa Catalina. Her father is in prison, and that cussed bandit, Lorenzo Benevidas, is asking that she marry him as the price of her father's release. So the Kid takes old Long Tom and rides like lightning for Santa Catalina. All this I got from the Chino cook after the two had gone. Nobody else was here when they started."

It would be hard to describe the expression that was on Ellis Ford's countenance when he heard that.

"Well, that beats Hades!" he exclaimed. "But I don't blame the boy, Billy. I can't blame Laramie for being an American. I would have done the very same thing, myself. Well, it's everybody but the cook for Santa Catalina, Billy. Send a man to the Crossed-L ranch, and one to the O-Bar-O, and get every man they can spare—and mind you don't let any grass grow under the hoofs of that buckskin. Time is precious!"

Time was even more precious than he guessed.

* * * *

Not one of the three men in Jackson Farnham's besieged home was a man who could sit idly and await the blowing up of the house by the villainous Benevidas. Farnham himself was no stranger to fighting, having spent the greater part of his life there in that revolution-ridden country. There, in one of the dark rooms of the upper story, the three discussed this method of escape and that, and there was no plan that gave promise of more than a hair-breadth chance. Each man had but one thought in his mind, and that one thought was of the salvation of the girl Beatrice. It seemed that even the sacrifice of their lives could be of no benefit to her. They had a terrible man to deal with. Lorenzo Benevidas, who had been wounded in the leg by a bullet from young Ford's revolver, and who had been choked almost to unconsciousness by the strong hands of Long Tom Angel, would have no mercy.

After a silence of two or three minutes Ford's voice came, and it sounded hollow and unnatural in the pitchy blackness.

"Since Miss Farnham would rather lose her life while trying to make a getaway than to fall into the hands of the bandit, I suggest this: Tom and I will each take two loaded rifles and a loaded revolver, go down to the front veranda, and engage the guards; we will draw the attention of the Mexicans to the front, and while we are doing that, Mr. Farnham, you and your daughter will try to escape by way of one of the rear doors downstairs. Benevidas is still at his headquarters, I gather by what Tom has told us, and his men will not be so apt to discover our little strategy without his foxy brain to direct them. Take revolvers with you, Mr. Farnham; if you are seen and attacked, we will hear your shooting and come to help you. I know it is a slim chance, but it is the best way I can think of. Can you suggest a better move?"

Farnham couldn't, and neither could Long Tom. Just then there was a shout from the street in front of the house——

"Senor Farnham!"

It was the voice of the bandit himself. Benevidas was not at headquarters!

The four Americans went quickly to one of the windows of a room that faced to the front.

"Well?" Farnham shouted back.

"I am going to dynamite your house," said Benevidas. "If the senorita wishes to be saved, let her come out—alone. There is but one minute for the decision, Senor Farnham!"

"The decision has already been made," cried Beatrice, without a tremor. "'The senorita' does not wish to be saved."

"Then begin to say your last prayers," sneered Benevidas.

Long Tom Angel gripped Ford's arm and hurried him toward the rifles. "Now is our time," said he.

The Farnhams went with them downstairs and to one of the heavy front doors.

"There is a little hill to the north of town," Ford whispered to the old American: "If you succeed in getting away, Tom and I will try mighty hard to meet you at that little hill and help you on to the border."

"We'll wait for you an hour, if we get away," said Farnham.

As she opened the door for him, Beatrice whispered to Laramie Ford. "If anything happens—good-by!"

Ford caught her hand and kissed it. He could have made no spoken reply that would have been half so eloquent.

The two gallant Texans stationed themselves behind the low and heavy stone balustrade, some ten yards apart, and opened a rapid fire toward the dark shapes that they knew were trees and shrubs in the grounds and toward the streets. One of their first shots brought a howl of pain. Then the guards answered the firing of the two Americans, and the keen crack of the rifles produced a harsh and continuous staccato of sound. Bullets threw fragments of stone and the dust of mortar to the faces and eyes of the defenders, but they fought on determinedly, desperately.

"Pour it at 'em, good old Kid!" Long Tom shouted again and again. "Pour it at 'em!"

When they had emptied the magazines of the four repeating rifles, they drew their revolvers and emptied them, too, at the hidden foe. Judging by the number of shots that had been fired toward them, they believed that the whole force of Lorenzo Benevidas was out there in front of them. In that case, Jackson Farnham and his daughter should be well on their way out of the vicinity of their home.

Then the bullets of the Mexicans ceased coming as quickly as they had begun, and with the cessation there was the clear ringing of hoofbeats on a street somewhere beyond the Farnham stables. Angel crept across the veranda floor, and muttered to his friend:

"That's sure your hoss, Kid; I know his step."

"I was just thinking that," replied Ford. "I wonder——"

A ragged volley of shots interrupted him. It had been fired somewhere beyond the Farnham stables. Then there were more shots, and curses, and still more shots; and after a few minutes there rose distinctly above the uproar a stentorian voice that was as music to the Texans——

"Viva Carranza!"

"By George, Kid," cried Angel, "it's the Carranzistas, and we're safe! Let's hurry to that hill and tell the Farnhams!"

"Good!" said Ford.

Angel and his companion, each carrying a loaded rifle and a loaded revolver, set out at a run across the grounds, and not one shot was fired at them. A tag-end of Venustiano Carranza's forces, and not the forces of Lorenzo Benevidas, occupied Santa Catalina now. Once in the street, the two went at a brisk rate toward the point at which they had agreed to meet the Farnhams.

They found the little hill deserted, save for themselves. The minutes dragged by, and still the Farnhams did not come. Long Tom, now and then, put his fingers into his mouth and gave a shrill whistle that carried far. There was no answer. Ford and his friend began to entertain grave fears that, after all, something had gone wrong—as things are forever going in the disturbed Republic.

"I wonder if the Carranzistas have detained them?" said Ford, when they had been waiting for an hour.

"The Carranzistas wouldn't hold 'em long," said Angel. "Say, Kid, we're both dead tired, and we need sleep bad; s'pose we nap right here while we're waitin' on Farnham. If he comes, he'll yell for us; and if he yells, I'm sure to hear him. You need it; you're holler-eyed as a skull; you'll have to rest some time, why not now?"

"You win," said Laramie Ford, very wearily; and they stretched themselves out under the star-sprinkled sky and soon went to sleep.

They awoke at the break of day, sat up and looked at each other questioningly. There was no sign of the Farnhams! For several minutes they did not speak. Angel frowningly watched a tarantula-hawk circle over its prey. Somewhere in a thicket below them a chaparral-cock made a noise like a wooden rattle. A bluebird sailed prettily toward them, saw them, and turned away.

Together they made their way back to the heart of Santa Catalina and to the silent house of old Jackson Farnham. As they were about to climb the veranda steps, the old hag Faustina, mother of the bandit Benevidas, came from the house with her arms filled with loot, the greater part of which was table silver. Ford sprang to the veranda and seized her by the wrist before she knew he was anywhere near her.

"Drop it, you thief!" he snapped. "Where are the Farnhams?"

Faustina shrugged her shoulders and dropped the stolen goods. "I don't know anything about the Farnhams, senor," she whined.

"Where is your son Lorenzo?" demanded Ford.

Again Faustina shrugged. "Ah," she said, showing her broken yellow teeth in an unbeauteous smile, "the Carranzistas—perros d'infierno——"

"Mr. Benevidas has gone to a stronghold in the hills, Kid," cut in Angel. "I wouldn't waste time with Faustina. Anything she tells you is apt to be a lie. Let's look for the Farnhams; eh? But they're not likely to be in the house, or they'd have kept Faustina from carryin' away this silverware."

Ford freed Faustina's bony wrist, and the old woman went away muttering curses against all Gringoes. Angel took up the plunder, and they went into the house, entering by a door that had been left open by Faustina. A thoro search of both stories revealed nothing worthy of note. Then they left the house by a rear door—and found Jackson Farnham, with a broad, deep gash in one side of his head, lying in a clump of shrubbery! Beside him lay two revolvers.

"Great Heaven, Tom!" cried Ford, and he knelt beside the prostrate figure and turned it so that the white face came upward. "But he isn't dead. Bring some water, Tom—quick!"

Angel hastened for water. With it they wet the unconscious man's face, and bathed his wound. Soon he showed signs of coming to, and they carried him to his sleeping apartment upstairs and put him to bed. He rallied rapidly under the revivifying influences of cold water and whisky. Soon he was able to talk.

"Beatrice and I had just left the house," he said, "when half a dozen of those fellows sprang toward us. I saw them fling a blanket over my daughter's head, and then I was knocked down—by a gun's butt, I think. Ford, that scoundrel Benevidas has carried away both my daughter and the Blue Star—and I have nothing, now—nothing——"

He broke down, and his grief, the grief of an old man, was piteous. Then he added, tremulously, "But I'd rather have my little girl back than to have ten thousand diamonds such as the Blue Star——"

"Don't worry," smiled Laramie Ford. "The Carranzistas are here now, and my father and his men will soon be here, and you'll be safe."

"You mean," said Farnham, "that you're going to leave me here——"

"And go after the little girl—yes, that's what I mean," interrupted Ford. "And if we don't come back with her, we won't come back at all; eh, Tom, my friend?"

CHAPTER VI.

IT WAS a thick and heavy blanket that the bandit-revolutionist's followers threw over the head of Miss Farnham to smother her outcries, and it almost cut off her breathing. Moreover, it was a very much soiled blanket, and its earthy odor was well-nigh unbearable to her refined sensibilities. Still struggling desperately—for she was a healthy girl, and strong—she was hurried thru the grounds and to the street that lay directly behind the house. A moment later, and Lorenzo Benevidas came dashing up on the horse that young Laramie Ford had ridden from his father's ranch. The bandit had appropriated the animal to his own personal use.

"Up with her—here on the saddle!" he ordered in a low growl. "Those accursed dogs of Carranza are coming!"

Almost before she realized what had taken place, Beatrice Farnham was sitting sidewise on the front of a cowman's saddle, and the arms of the villain who called himself a general were holding her securely.

Then there came the advance guard of the Carranzistas, and there was some firing. Benevidas and his men did not attempt to make a stand; the odds, they knew, were too many against them—besides, what had they to gain by fighting Carranza's soldiers? So they whipped to their right, and disappeared in the darkness like so many spirits. Their leader soon succeeded in placing a row of adobe houses between him and his pursuers, thereby rendering himself and his captive safe from flying bullets. He did not wait for his men, most of whom were on foot, to join him when he had reached the open country, but went riding like the wind toward the hills that lay to the westward. Tom Angel had been correct when he had said that Benevidas had a stronghold in the hills. What Mexican bandit has not such a stronghold?

Half an hour after they had left the outskirts of Santa Catalina behind them, Benevidas took the smothering blanket from about the girl's head. Beatrice was at once conscious of an almost overwhelming sense of relief. Never before had fresh air seemed so good. She half turned toward the Mexican, and asked:

"Where is my father?"

"He chose to remain behind, senorita."

"You mean," said Beatrice, quickly, "that you chose for him to remain in Santa Catalina. Is he safe?"

"As safe as you, yourself."

"But I am not safe!" cried Beatrice. "Tell me, where are you taking me?"

The answer came immediately: "I am taking you to the very finest hacienda, and the very strongest stronghold, in all Mexico, senorita. You shall see that I am no poor man, carissima mia. All women are tempted by wealth, such wealth as you shall see, and by such beauty as I shall show you. You will change your mind and marry me, senorita."

"I will never marry you," Beatrice disagreed.

"No?" laughed Benevidas. "No? You'll see. I may as well tell you in advance what my plans are concerning you. I shall do everything in my power to win your love. I shall make your least wish the highest of all laws—unless it be that you wish to leave me. You will be queen out there, with an incomparable duenna, and with servants to do your every bidding, while you are learning to love me. After a few months, I shall marry you whether you like it or not. I ask you to kindly remember this, senorita: I have always been most courteous to you. Indeed, I am most courteous to you even now; see, I hold you, not in my arms, but on the saddle."

"You have my undying gratitude for that, anyway," replied Jackson Farnham's daughter. "I wonder if it would be possible to buy my liberty from you, General Benevidas? If I will find the Blue Star for you, will you take me back to my father in Santa Catalina?"

"Ah, the Estrella Azul!" exclaimed the bandit, as tho he had not thought of the great Porfirio Diaz diamond for a very long time. "True," he continued, "I did lose it—I lost it to the big Circle-F cowman. Just how far would you have to go to find it, Senorita Farnham?"

She half turned and looked at the swarthy, evil face out of the corners of her topaz eyes. Even in the pale light of the stars, she could make out distinctly that characteristic Mephisto-like smile of his.

"Do you think I have it now?" she asked boldly.

"Of course," readily. "The Circle-F cowman is honest. He carried the stone to you as soon as he came into possession of it."

Lorenzo Benevidas had reasoned aright. Beatrice Farnham now had the package containing the diamond concealed in the thick folds of her brown hair.

All that night they rode westward at a brisk pace, over this trail and that, and at daybreak they halted. To the intense surprise of Beatrice, the great hills that had always seemed so near to Santa Catalina were still some twenty miles farther on. Distances are deceptive in Mexico. The girl struggled to an upright position and murmured drowsily:

"What now?"

"Are you hungry?" asked the bandit.

"Very, and tired, and sleepy. Is there a house near?"

For answer Benevidas turned the horse into a very rough trail that led up a little green valley. Fifteen minutes later they had arrived at a house of stone and adobe, which set in a grove of trees. The Mexican hallooed, and a thickset fellow with a straggling black beard answered immediately.

"Breakfast for two, Juan!" ordered the bandit. "Tell the good senora, then take my horse and feed and water it."

After breakfasting, and sleeping for three hours, Benevidas again took the girl on his saddle front and rode westward.

The middle of the afternoon found them very near to a great and rugged range of hills that were almost wholly barren of vegetation. As far as the eye could reach there were precipices, and above them vast stretches of gray, bowlder-strewn heights. Then Beatrice saw opening in the great wall before her a pass so narrow that only two horsemen might ride abreast thru it. When they had entered the opening, Beatrice was grateful for the cooling shade; the day was warm, even for Mexico, and the girl had been suffering for hours because of the extreme heat.

"This pass is half a mile long, and no wider anywhere than it is here," said Benevidas, "and it is the only entrance to the Valley of Palms. The man never lived who could cross these hills except by means of an aeroplane. Chiquitica, one man stationed in a cleft of one of these walls, with plenty of ammunition and a good rifle, can hold one hundred other men at bay. I have a machine gun—and with that—well, a whole army couldn't get by it, Senorita Farnham. Now you understand, don't you, why I said that I had the strongest stronghold in all Mexico?"

"Yes," Beatrice murmured simply.

One of the bandit's phrases had stuck in the girl's mind; and it was this, "The Valley of Palms." When and where had she heard that phrase before? It was queerly, strangely familiar, and as elusive as the odor of some subtle Oriental perfume. All the way thru the narrow pass she tried to remember, and failed. At length she decided that she must have heard the name when but a child, and she gave it up at that.

When they had made the pass, Benevidas halted his stolen horse and stretched forth an arm.

"Look!" he exclaimed proudly.

Beatrice was already looking. She saw a sight that, in spite of the apparent hopelessness of her predicament, set her beauty-loving soul on a high pinnacle of delight. The Valley of Palms was a mile in length, half a mile in breadth, and walled in on all sides by the sheer precipices of the hills. It was an emerald oasis in a setting of hot gray desert stone, a veritable paradise, an Eden of tropical splendor; royal palms, cocoanut palms, palmettos so tall that they were stately, luxuriant banana trees and pepper trees, and every blooming thing that grew in Mexico, grew there. The land had been well tilled up to a year before, and the tangle of greenery, starred everywhere with flowers of all colors, told Beatrice plainly that the soil was deep and fertile.

But it was the house, perhaps, that formed the most striking part of that magnificent picture. It was immense in size, of stone that had been taken from the nearby hills, and roofed with dull red tiles; it had two roof gardens, a spacious inner court filled with growing and blooming things, and broad verandas overrun with vines. Its doors were heavy, and bound with iron bands; its windows were high, and protected by rusted iron bars. It reminded Beatrice of baronial castles she had heard of. The grounds were inclosed by a stone wall some eight feet in height, in the top of which were set sharpened iron spikes. There were but two gates, and these were of iron; one of them was at the front, and the other was at the rear.

And then it dawned upon Beatrice Farnham that she had known, at some time or other in her life, of that severe but princely house!

Benevidas was speaking. "Is it not grand, senorita, all of it?"

"Undoubtedly," agreed Beatrice, without turning her head.

"It is all yours, if you will but marry me," said the revolutionist.

"I will never marry you," declared Jackson Farnham's half-Spanish daughter.

"Wait," said Benevidas, with his Mephisto-like smile. "Wait. I have yet other things to show you."

They rode on. A heavily built, middle-aged Mexican, with a much-adorned sombrero on his head and a ring of keys in his hand, hastened to open the front gate for them.

"Buenas!" the bandit chief called gayly to his caretaker. "All is well here, my good Miguel?"

"Si, Senor General!" said Miguel.

Benevidas halted his horse at the steps of the front veranda. Miguel caught the girl under the arms and set her feet lightly on the ground, after which he sprang to the horse's head and took the rein. Benevidas swung himself from the saddle, took Beatrice by an arm, and went with her up to an ironbound door that stood half open.

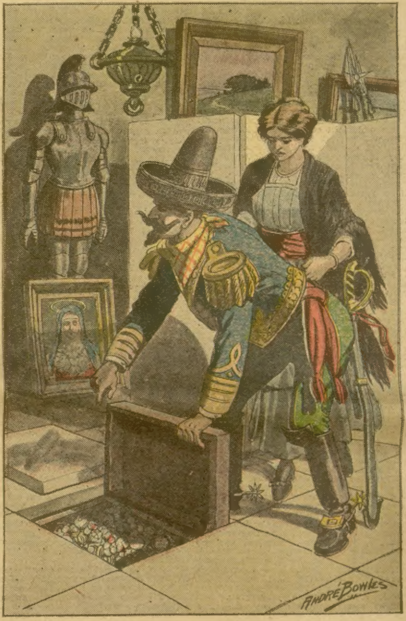
"Hola, Alejandra!" he cried. "Hola, hola, Alejandra!"

A buxom middle-aged Mexican woman in rather gorgeous attire hurried to answer the summons. She bowed and smiled in a pleased fashion.

"This is Alejandra, the wife of Miguel the caretaker, Senorita Farnham," said Benevidas. "She will act both as your duenna and your body-servant." Then to the Mexican woman: "You are to do anything she wishes done, Alejandra—that is, anything in reason. The senorita will some day be my wife and the mistress of this house, Alejandra."

"Bien, Senor General!" smiled Alejandra. "Will the senorita come with me? She is tired and hungry!"

"But first I must show her something," said Benevidas. "Will you come with me, Senorita Farnham?"



"All this shall be yours!"

It was a command, not a request. Beatrice followed him because there was nothing else to do. He showed her fortunes in old armor and in paintings of old Spanish buccaneers. Then he led her to a great room in the west wing of the house, and closed the door behind them.

"Prepare yourself, senorita," he said, "for a sight that few persons ever have the opportunity of seeing."

He went to a corner of the room, lifted a stone from the floor, and revealed a carved mahogany chest. He threw back the lid, and Beatrice saw that the chest was filled with jewels—diamonds, rubies, pearls, emeralds, set in rings, necklaces and bracelets of gold!

"All this, too, shall be yours when you marry me!" said the bandit.

"It's loot!" cried Beatrice. "You stole it all!"

Benevidas shrugged his shoulders. "What of it? It can never be taken from you, carissima. Now—can you refuse me?"

There was tension in his voice. Beatrice feared to anger him, and well she might. She resolved to gain time, if she could.

"I understand that you are in no haste," she murmured.

"So!" agreed Benevidas. "You are right, Senorita Farnham, I am in no haste. Now let us go to Alejandra. She will look after you well."

Alejandra met them a moment later. Benevidas backed away from Beatrice with a low bow.

"Hasta manana!" he said; then he straightened, turned, and walked away with his sword jangling against his heels.

CHAPTER VII.

LARAMIE FORD and Long Tom Angel had just succeeded in quieting the fears of the wounded Jackson Farnham, when there was the sound of hoofbeats in the street before the house. Young Ford ran to a window that faced the front, and looked out; then he gave a joyous cry.

"Dad!"

His father and some forty cowmen, all of them well armed and well mounted, had arrived at last. They halted and shouted greetings.

Ellis Ford dismounted hastily, left the rein of his horse hanging, and hastened to the house. His son met him on the veranda, and told him what there was to tell. Then old Ford went upstairs to see Jackson Farnham, with whom he had once had a warm friendship. The two shook hands.

"So they handed you a crack on the noggin, did they, Jack?" smiled Ellis Ford. "Well, wait until we get thru with them!" They'll get two cracks on the noggin for that one, all of them, and a few doses of Winchester pills besides. Now, buck up, Jack. We're going after your daughter, and we'll bring her back, too. We'll leave two men here to take care of you, which will give Laramie and Long Tom each a horse."

Then to his son, "I wonder if we can get Carranza's men to join us?"

"Perhaps," said Laramie. "Let us see whether we can get them."

Together, father and son, they went to the temporary headquarters of Colonel Esplonzo, the officer in command of the tag-end of Carranza's forces. The Colonel was an old man, and he received the Americans very cordially. The Fords stated their mission briefly, and the officer tugged at his iron-gray goatee and began to think.

Finally he shook his head. "That Benevidas," he muttered, "he disappears when you chase him. Simply disappears. I never could find out where he goes. I've chased him half a dozen times. When you attack him, his men scatter like birds. I presume they have a meeting-place—at some secret stronghold. Doubtless there are persons here in Santa Catalina who could tell us where his stronghold is; but they won't do it, Senor Ford. I've tried, several times, to make these Santa Catalinans tell. Always they profess ignorance. You see, they fear the vengeance of Benevidas—and the vengeance of Lorenzo Benevidas, senores, is really a thing to be feared. I know him very well. My men are tired, very tired. Their feet are sore from marching. I have promised them three days of rest here in Santa Catalina. But—if you will discover the stronghold of the bandit, senores, I will help you to rescue the girl."

The Fords went back to the little body of cowmen feeling that they could not depend very much on Colonel Esplonzo and his soldiers.

After breakfasting and feeding their horses, the Texans procured rations for two days, filled their canteens, and rode out of town, headed for the hills, with the Fords and Long Tom Angel leading. It was very reasonable to believe that Benevidas had gone to the hills. Before they had traveled for an hour, Long Tom discovered the hoofprints of the horse that had been stolen from the younger Ford. The trailing was easy after that. The Texans followed Benevidas rapidly, considering the weariness of their mounts.

They spent the night at the house at which Beatrice Farnham and her captor had breakfasted that morning—and their host, of course, at the first opportunity, sent an underling to take the information to the bandit.

Therefore it followed that the Texans were greeted with a volley of bullets when they approached the narrow pass a little before noon. Fortunately, the Mexicans fired too soon, and the hail of lead fell a hundred yards short.

"Now we're up against the real thing," said Ellis Ford, as they halted. "It will be hard to get thru that pass with machine-gun fire directed at us. For that was a Benet-Mercier, as sure as water runs downhill! Let's fall back a mile, strike camp, and talk things over."

They fell back, dismounted and staked their horses, and immediately went into council. A few minutes later, a man rode for Colonel Esplonzo and his men.

Young Ford looked decidedly blue, and his father noticed it.

"What's the matter, Kid?" asked the old ranchman.

"Are we to do nothing," frowned Laramie, "until Esplonzo comes?"

"What could we do now, son?" said Ellis Ford. "You couldn't get across those hills without an aeroplane, and you couldn't dislodge that machine gun without a cannon. We'd better wait for Esplonzo, son."

"But the girl!" exclaimed Laramie.

A light of understanding shone suddenly in Ellis Ford's eyes. "I see, I see!" he muttered. "It's a love affair already!"

They put out a guard line and made no fires that night. And when the owner of the great Circle-F ranch awoke the next morning, he found that two of his men had disappeared! And one of them was his son.

This thrilling story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

His Proof.

A convict in a French penal colony who was serving a life sentence there desired to marry one of the woman convicts and made application to the authorities for the necessary permission. The Governor of the colony offered no objections, but the priest proceeded to cross-examine the prisoner.

"Did you marry in France?"

"Yes."

"And is your wife dead?"

"She is."

"Have you any document to show that your wife is dead?"

"No."

"Then I must decline to marry you. You must produce some proof that your wife is dead."

There was a pause, and the bride-prospective looked at her would-be-bridegroom. Finally he said: "I can prove that my former wife is dead."

"How will you do so?"

"I was sent here for killing her."

The bride accepted him notwithstanding.

* * *

Embarrassed.

"What can I do you for—do for you?" asked the sweet young saleswoman.

Timothy Trask grasped the counter with one hand and the blood left his face and came back with a few friends.

"Well, sir?" came a little tartly from Anastasia Skiggs (for such was the saleswoman's name.)

Timothy Trask grasped the counter with his other hand and his face turned the color of stewed raspberries.

It was then that Anastasia Skiggs was struck by the horrible thought that the man had deliberately chosen her counter as a place to fall down in a fit at.

"Oh, sir, take the perfumery counter, three aisles down; there's a nice soft carpet there," she pleaded.

Without a word Timothy Trask turned and fled. He bolted into a telephone box, from which he called up to his wife:

"Come down and buy your own corsets!"

* * *

A Miser's Lesson.

The other day the mills had just stopped, and a weaver named Dick, who was noted for his stingy and miserly ways, was going home. Dick hadn't been very well that day. Just as he left the mill he happened to meet a doctor. So, thinking he could get some medical advice for nothing, he stopped the doctor and said he was very ill.

"Where do you suffer most?" said the medical man.

"In my chest, doctor."

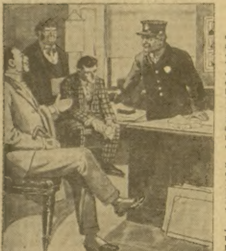
"Ah, that's bad. Please close your eyes. That's right. Now put out your tongue, so that I can examine it closely."

Dick did as he was told. After he had waited for about ten minutes he opened his eyes to find an amused crowd of factory people round him, the doctor having meanwhile disappeared.

THE MICHAUX Z-RAY

Or, The Criminal Investigator

By Harry Stephen Keeler



"Seen him?" he repeated, "Lord yes!"

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CHAPTER XXIII.

"YOU don't mean," asked Billy, after a pause in which he watched the zinc scraps seething in the bottom of the glass vessel, "that Victor Michaux was insane—that he only imagined that he was carrying in his possession a machine for producing a fatal ray?"

"Not exactly," rejoined Jarrick, fumbling for a match in a rusty iron matchbox. "I am hoping—in fact, I am confident—that Chief Callahan will telephone me that the body of Michaux is no other than the original of a certain photograph which I have never seen, but which I strongly suspect is to be found in one of our books at the bureau known as Classification No. 6. If he does, I can provide an explanation of the Michaux Z-ray story. But if he does not, I fear that we shall be more or less up in the air. We may then be compelled to——" He stopped abruptly and struck the match on the underside of the marble slab.

"The action of the sulphuric acid on the zinc," he explained, "is producing zinc sulphate and pure hydrogen gas. And the hydrogen, of course, is flowing thru this tiny bent tube. In fact, I can light it." He touched the lighted match to the end of the bent tube, and a pale lilac flame sprang into being. "But if I had done so too soon, the mixture of the original air in the bottle and the hydrogen would have formed an explosive combination, with the result that each of us might have received an eyeful of glass splinters. But we're quite safe now, however."

From one of the shelves he took down a white porcelain plate which he polished with the corner of his rubber apron till it shone clean and bright. Bringing it close to the bottle, he allowed the tiny lilac flame to play against it. But not a stain was left on the white surface; not even a suggestion of dirt. In truth, it was a sootless flame.

"Now," directed Jarrick, indicating the test tube which held the dirty mixture made from the material wrapped in the newspaper packet, "pour part of that mixture down the funnel. Say about one-third of it. And watch the color of our hydrogen flame."

Billy did as he was ordered, keeping his eye on the tiny jet. It continued to burn lilac for a few seconds, but suddenly turned blue. And immediately a metallically bright, gleaming, steel-gray or black smudge was deposited on the smooth porcelain surface of the plate. Jarrick then moved the plate slowly across the flame, with the result that a black metallic streak was left in its wake.

With a snort he blew out the flame. He tore off his rubber apron, donned his coat and hat from the corner where he had flung them, and turned to Billy.

"Point by point," he declared, "we're going around the fatal triangle. We've covered the side AB as much as we can. The side BC I've just finished with. And now I'm going to traverse the side CA—the side which lies at 1132 North Clark street. In fact, I'm going straight there now, and I'll probably see—well—I'll see what I shall see." He looked Billy over from head to foot, and finally allowed his gaze to rest on the dark circles under the younger man's eyes. "But—I think while I'm gone I'll just detail you to remain here in order to catch Chief Callahan's 'phone message if there is one." He pointed to the leather couch. "From those circles under your eyes and from what you said in the chief's office this morning, I imagine you didn't sleep any too much last night. How would you like to stretch out on that for an hour or two?"

"It looks pretty good to me," Billy admitted, "for I'm beginning to feel worn out with the quick passage of events. I'll be mighty glad to rest there and listen for the ring of the telephone bell. But I'll be still more glad to see this whole case explained."

"It'll be explained. It's bound to be." Jarrick straightened his refractory steel-rimmed spectacles on his long nose, and pulled his hat down almost to his ears. "With the receipt of an answer to four or five telegrams I shall send to St. Louis under the code of the Chicago detective bureau, I expect to throw a little light on the side AB of our triangle. And the third side, CA? What will the next two hours show? Who knows?"

He glanced at his watch.

"It's now 11:30 o'clock. There's a little restaurant around the corner on Chicago avenue and a duplicate key to the front door hanging there above that bottle of zinc scraps. If I'm delayed you might slip out at noontime and get yourself something to eat. But be sure and come back, and above all—watch for Callahan's message! Everything is hinging on that."

With that he left the room and several seconds later the front door slammed behind him.

Billy walked over to the couch and flung himself on it. And he found it to be the most comfortable piece of furniture he had ever reposed on. He had no way of knowing, to be sure, that Jarrick himself for the last twenty years had been lying on that same couch at night from ten o'clock until the wee small hours of the morning, reading, assimilating, indexing, and ever recording in that marvelous memory of his the thousands of miscellaneous facts which he gleaned from books on every subject from the most trivial to the most deeply scientific.

And as he lay there, he endeavored to piece together Jarrick's actions, to draw some deduction from the man's scattered statements.

The latter had declared most emphatically that Mrs. Hunter had met her death thru some human agency—and he had evidently believed that it had been perpetrated by some one in the Devonshire. That, of course, was proved by his pronounced interest in the dope fiend, Mose Zisco, in Lilywhite, in Doctor MacPherson, and in the druggist's apprentice, Henry Jensen. And such a theory was well borne out by Jarrick's investigation of the window and door, which showed conclusively that no person could have entered the room without producing a most alarming squeaking. But his actions in making the so-called Marsh test were somewhat obscure, tho it was plain that all Jarrick's proceedings were being directed toward the one end, to prove that his own ambition, the invention of a new and fatal ray, had not yet been realized by any one. As to what he expected to elicit, however, by a mere reconnoitering of the district where the fire had taken place the night before, was doubtful. The fact that the owner of the model factory in the rear had been paying the rent of the ancient shack in front, surely admitted of some unusual explanation. Yet, if the owner of the model factory showed no inclination to talk, there was assuredly no way to compel him. That much was certain.

But again Billy McClintock began to puzzle about the relation of the whole case to Carolle and her uncle. The bitterness of last night's feelings was considerably diminished by this time, but he still cared for her with all the affection that there was in him. Yet, in just the short week she had been absent from Chicago, she had changed—and changed completely—toward him; she had requested him to forget that he had ever asked her to be his wife, and to overlook the fact that she had said yes. And right there a peculiar connection had darted into the case again. She had spent her week's vacation with a girl friend in St. Louis. Jarrick had announced his intention of communicating by telegraph with the same city. What was the common relation between Michaux, Carolle, and St. Louis, Missouri?

Yes, Carolle Harbison had lied to the one person who loved her best of all, when she falteringly informed him that her brown-bearded visitor was a Doctor Ostergaard of the New York Life Insurance Company.

But as he lay on the couch, his hands clasped tightly over his eyes, thinking, worrying, puzzling over the whole affair, the effect of last night's restless tossing crept slowly upon him. He became more and more drowsy. His thoughts grew more hazy. And finally he fell asleep.

He awoke suddenly, and when he did awaken, he sprang to his feet, rubbing his eyes in bewilderment at the strange room he was in. But the fact that he was in Copelin Jarrick's apartment slowly sifted back into his consciousness. As he stood there, glancing in unbelief at the clock whose hands showed the time to be three o'clock, and at the afternoon sun which was streaming in over the chemical apparatus, he realized with a start that he had slept for nearly four hours. Where, then, had Jarrick been all this time? And what had awakened him with such startling rapidity?

The 'phone bell on the mahogany desk suddenly jangled sharply, and continued to give forth a series of long rings. So he crossed the floor hurriedly, dropped into the swivel chair, and raised the receiver to his ear.

"Hello!"

"Good Lord, Jarrick!" said a voice with exasperation, "I've been ringing for the past ten minutes. This is Callahan talking. I've——"

"But this is McClintock on the wire," explained Billy. "Mr. Jarrick left here at 11:30. He instructed me to wait for your message and to get it all ready for him when he returns. And to be candid with you, I fell asleep."

"Good enough, then," grunted Callahan. "Here's the dope to give to Jarrick. Tell him for me that he hit the nail a beautiful, dull wallop on the head. On the strength of his tip, Luke McCracken—Scar-chin Luke—was picked up on the outside of the Canal Street Depot an hour ago. And by a comparison of the body of this Victor Michaux with the photographs under Classification No. 6, I've found that he was nobody else but Charles Vandersloan of Brownsville, Missouri."

CHAPTER XXIV.

"CHARLES VANDERSLOAN—of Brownsville—Missouri," repeated Billy, wonderingly. "And his name, then, wasn't Victor Michaux at all?"

"Exactly. The comparison between the body and the photograph shows that positively. On the other hand, Luke McCracken, you might tell Jarrick, denies that he's Scar-chin Luke at all, according to the story that came in over the wire from Foley and McGinnis, who made the pinch. But we can clap the Bertillon on him or get a personal identification. And that last is going to be easier than the honorable McCracken anticipates. He—but are you getting all this, McClintock?"

"I am, chief. It's more or less mystifying to me, because Mr. Jarrick hasn't let me in on his deductions at all. But I'll give it to him just as you're telling it to me."

"Very well," went on the voice of the police official in the receiver. "As soon as Jarrick returns tell him to come straight to headquarters. For immediately Foley and McGinnis notified me from the Canal Street Depot that they got this fellow McCracken, I telegraphed President Allen Stillwell at Brownsville. And Brownsville telegraphed back twenty minutes later that Mr. Stillwell himself was in Chicago to attend the Bankers' Convention at the Hotel LaSalle. I tried locating him at the Hotel LaSalle, the Blackstone, and the Sherman House, with the result that I got him on the wire at the latter place. So he's coming straight to headquarters to look over the body of this Michaux—or Vandersloan—and to identify McCracken as soon as Foley and McGinnis arrive. That's all, now. Have you got it all straight—before I hang up?"

"I've got it," replied Billy. "And I'll give it to Jarrick the minute he steps in."

When he turned from the 'phone he began to ponder over these new developments with the greatest of bewilderment. From the few meager clews that had surrounded his aunt's strange death, Jarrick had deduced the fact that one Luke McCracken had been in Chicago Saturday night, and this being the case, Luke McCracken, then, had killed Mrs. Hunter. Yet McCracken, assuredly, was not—and never had been—a guest of the Devonshire. But leaving all this aside for the present, what was there in the case that had pointed to the presence in it of a Charles Vandersloan? And why had the latter individual gone to such trouble to conceal his identity under a French-sounding name, as well as to hide completely the name of the small town which he came from? And last but not least, who was President Allen Stillwell of Brownsville, Missouri—and in what way was he the only person who could definitely identify the man picked up at the Canal Street Depot as Luke McCracken—and Victor Michaux as Charles Vandersloan? There was no doubt whatever, Billy concluded, that Copelin Jarrick had manipulated his few observations and clews in a surprising—in fact, in a far-fetched manner. For, from a death in a top hall bedroom of a semi-fashionable Chicago boarding-house, it was a long call to an obscure town called Brownsville, Missouri.

As he sat on the edge of the couch, puzzling over these latest developments, he heard the rattle of the front door and a violent slam. A second later Jarrick himself came puffing into the room, smiling from ear to ear.

"Well, what news?" he asked. "I've been over the side CA of the triangle and it's solved. Did the chief 'phone? And what did he say?"

Billy told him Callahan's message completely. As he covered it from beginning to end, Jarrick's smile seemed to grow more and more expansive, until his ruddy face resembled a harvest moon.

"Capital," he commented, when the younger man had concluded. "We'll start out at once for the detective bureau." He pulled out a massive silver watch. "Three forty-five. We may reach there before our friend, Luke McCracken. So put on your hat."

By means of a North State street car taken a block from the St. Benedict Apartments, Billy and Jarrick reached the door of the detective bureau within less than fifteen minutes. They proceeded at once to Callahan's office upstairs. He was still sitting all alone at his desk, drumming idly on it, and gazing out of the window. But he sprang up at once when they entered the room.

"In the name of Mike, Jarrick," he asked, "how did you dope out that Mrs. Hunter was murdered? And where in almighty blazes did you tie up this whole affair to Charles Vandersloan? And how did you know that Scar-chin was in town? For it must be McCracken that we've got. Foley and McGinnis first locked him up at the 2d precinct station, and the sergeant there telephoned me in a weight, height, and general description that tallied with the Bertillon card. Now, what have you got to say about all this, old man?"

Jarrick laughed quietly and dropped into a chair. "Every step in my solution of this odd case I'll give you presently, chief. But I'm not ready for that yet. You informed McClintock, I believe, that Brownsville telegraphed back to you that President Allen Stillwell was in Chicago for the Bankers' Convention, and that you rounded him up at the Sherman House. Is that correct? His two identifications will simplify matters greatly for us."

GLASS OF WATER
Upset Her.

People who don't know about food should never be allowed to feed persons with weak stomachs.

Sometime ago a young woman who lives in Me. had an attack of scarlet fever, and when convalescing was permitted to eat anything she wanted. Indiscriminate feeding soon put her back in bed with severe stomach and kidney trouble.

"There I stayed," she says, "three months, with my stomach in such condition that I could take only a few teaspoonfuls of milk or beef juice at a time. Finally Grape-Nuts was brought to my attention and I asked my doctor if I might eat it. He said, 'yes,' and I commenced at once.

"The food did me good from the start and I was soon out of bed and recovered from the stomach trouble. I have gained ten pounds and am able to do all household duties, some days sitting down only long enough to eat my meals. I can eat anything that one ought to eat, but I still continue to eat Grape-Nuts at breakfast and supper and like it better every day.

"Considering that I could stand only a short time, and that a glass of water seemed 'so heavy,' I am fully satisfied that Grape-Nuts has been everything to me and that my return to health is due to it.

"I have told several friends having nervous or stomach trouble what Grape-Nuts did for me and in every case they speak highly of the food."

"There's a Reason." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

"Yes. Stillwell is coming over here immediately to look at the body downstairs in the department morgue. After that's done he'll step upstairs here to the office and look over this fellow who denies he's Luke McCracken. And the latter is on his way here now with Foley and McGinnis."

"Good!" said Jarrick, rubbing his hands gleefully together. "Pin by pin, chief, falls into its proper place. I'm inclined to think that——"

But he was interrupted by the shuffling of feet and the entrance of two broad-shouldered, square-jawed men, dragging with them a smaller individual, one of whose wrists was tightly handcuffed to the wrist of one of his companions.

CHAPTER XXV.

WHILE the two taller men nodded pleasantly, almost deferentially, to Jarrick, Billy McClintock found opportunity to make a hasty survey of the smaller individual who had accompanied them. The latter, with one handcuff hanging loosely from his wrist now, stood sullenly back against the wall with his lips shut tightly together.

In stature he was slightly under the ordinary medium height that characterizes 80 per cent of male humanity. His face carried an unusually hard, defiant look, while his head was most peculiarly shaped, something like a bullet. In his eyes was a somewhat crafty look, and when he drew back his thin lips, two rows of irregular yellow teeth could be seen. On his chin, however, was the most distinctive characteristic of his whole appearance; a scar in the form of a cross, as tho two knife cuts at right angles had been made there at some past time in his life. Altho his outward appearance, to be sure, was neat, it was decidedly flashy, for the black and white checks in his suit were far too pronounced for the taste of a normal individual. His patent leather shoes, too, shone most resplendently, and in his tie was a very small stone that, glistening in the late afternoon sunlight which came into the room, showed the unmistakable reflection of a paste diamond. And on the back of his head, which was cocked a little to one side, was a black derby hat.

Callahan spun around finally and faced him. Then he glanced toward one of the two men who had brought him in.

"Put a chair against the wall, Foley, and take off those bracelets."

The man addressed as Foley did so, flinging the handcuffs loosely on the edge of the chief's desk. Without a word the little man in the checked suit dropped wearily into the chair.

"Well, Luke," said Callahan, leaning far back in his swivel chair, "so you really dropped into town for a little visit, eh? But what business carried you into the danger lines of a big city this time?"

"F'r th' ten thousandth time, I'm tellin' you guys I ain't talkin'." The little man moved a hand emphatically. "Do you get that, gents? I got nothin' to say. And as f'r my name bein' McCracken—I got nothin' to say on that score, neither. It's up to you." With that he lapsed into a sullen silence.

"That's all you can get out of him, chief," ventured the plain-clothes man, McGinnis. "He's kept his trap shut ever since Foley and me nabbed him in front of the deepo." He, too, dropped into a chair, but took pains to place himself between the door and the prisoner.

"Well, Luke," continued the police head, like a cat playing with a mouse, "we've got a gentleman coming here in a few minutes who hails from a town where he hung out for twenty-four hours at one time. After taking a look at the body of a Mr. Charles Vandersloan, who was found dead in the fire wreckage of a Clark street rooming-house early this morning, he's going to step up here and give you the once over. Now what have you got to say?"

At the beginning of the chief's speech the little man's face did not alter by a muscle; but as the gray-haired man at the desk proceeded with his ironical remarks, a perceptible change took place in the prisoner. His eyes opened wide and his lower jaw dropped open, but only for a few seconds did he hold that expression. Then his face resumed its mask of imperturbability

"Yes," broke in Jarrick, dreamily. "I shouldn't be surprised if President Stillwell will be more successful than all your arguments, chief, in awakening our friend, Mr. McCracken, from his condition of self-imposed aphasia. Suppose, however, that while we're waiting, I run over the conditions of the case as I found them this morning." He turned to one of the two plain-clothes men. "Foley, I'm certain this will interest you." He glanced toward Callahan. "Or, if you prefer to have a definite identification of this man here, suppose we get out the original McCracken's Bertillon card and clap the measurements on him?"

"Well, I'd much prefer to know more of this case," rejoined Callahan. "Suppose you give us a few pointers. How was Mrs. Hunter killed? That's what is puzzling me, for I took your statement as absolutely certain. And now——"

His words were broken off at the sound of a light, almost timid tapping on the door. McGinnis, who sat nearer the outside of the group, arose and opened it.

In the opening stood a slender little man, mopping his forehead with a white silk handkerchief. His smooth black hair was parted evenly in the middle, giving him, in spite of the tiny black mustache that adorned his upper lip, a decided air of femininity or dudishness. His clothes were obviously of the most approved cut and material, and his hands were gloved in immaculate tan kids. Hanging from the crook of one elbow was an expensive hand-carved cane with an elaborate gold head, and from the other arm dropped the folds of a light fall overcoat. A long black cord from his buttonhole, which itself held a perfect red carnation, rose to a pair of fragile eyeglasses perched on his nose. And when he opened his lips to speak, he displayed two rows of teeth as even and white as a girl's.

"Mr. Allen Stillwell is my name," he ventured diffidently. "I'm looking for Mr. Calla——"

"Step right in, Mr. Stillwell." The chief jumped up and placed a chair for the visitor. The latter advanced hesitatingly and dropped into it, first hanging his cane and light overcoat over the back. "Mr. Stillwell, to your left is Mr. Jarrick of the detective bureau, Mr. William McClintock, Mr. Foley and Mr. McGinnis, both of the department also, And the latter gentleman sitting against the wall—but, Mr. Stillwell, have you looked at the body downstairs yet?"

"I have," said Stillwell, after shaking hands all around. "And it was the body of poor Vandersloan himself. Did I understand you to say that he met his death in a fire? Or did you tell me heart disease?"

"In a certain sense—ahem—yes," put in Jarrick.

"Then, Mr. Stillwell, will you take a good look at the gentleman over near the wall and tell me if you've ever seen him before?"

Stillwell laughed quietly.

"Seen him?" he repeated. "Lord, yes! I recognized him the minute I entered the room, chief. That's the identical fellow whom I met sneaking across the railroad tracks at Brownsville, Missouri, on the afternoon of September 10th, 1914. And he's the one who disappeared the night the vault of our bank at Brownsville was blown open."

"Fine and dandy!" said Callahan. He paused. "Now, our records of that Brownsville bank robbery are confined to the original telegraphic or skeleton report that was sent to every police head thruout the country. Could we impose on your time and good nature, Mr. Stillwell, by asking you to run over that affair once more, and to give it to us in greater detail?"

"You surely may," said Stillwell, pleasantly, settling himself in his chair. "The affair, gentlemen, was as follows:"

CHAPTER XXVI.

"BUT before I start in," Mr. Stillwell began, "it might be advisable for me to make brief mention of the capacity in which I am connected with the bank of Brownsville, Missouri"—he nodded toward Foley, McGinnis, and Billy McClintock—"for I find myself somewhat of a stranger to a few of you gentlemen. And then, too, for the sake of completeness, I believe I should tell you in a few words how I became acquainted in a business way with poor Vandersloan, whose body lies downstairs."

He glanced around at the circle of attentive faces.

"As you probably know, however, I hold the presidency of this small town bank that I just mentioned. In fact, I've occupied that position for the last two years, having been elected to it by our board of directors—mostly farmers—immediately after the death of my father, Mr. Roger Stillwell. But previous to that time I occupied the position merely of cashier, working on a monthly salary. And now regarding Vandersloan.

"At the time of my father's death in Brownsville, and my election to the presidency of the Brownsville bank, it became necessary to engage a new cashier to take the position I had just vacated. But we had arranged for this contingency quite a while in advance. In fact, a most careful, painstaking man had been recommended to me by the Bankers' Protective Association, a Mr. Charles Vandersloan of Omaha, Nebraska. Vandersloan's experience as a cashier and his knowledge of all departments of banking were most thoro; and his recommendations for honesty were exceedingly high. The worst that could be said of him was that his record for a long stay with any particular bank seemed to show a maximum of about two years. Possibly there was a little of the gypsy in him; perhaps it was just a peculiar species of unrest that caused him to move from point to point. But enough to remark that Vandersloan seemed to be quite content to make the change from the busy metropolis of Omaha to our quiet little town in the Ozark foothills. And now with this explanation concerning myself and Charles Vandersloan disposed of, let me jump immediately to the events of September 11th, 1914, and the causes that led up to them.

"On or about the 7th of September—which is something over a year ago—if I remember the date correctly, an old fellow living about seven miles from Brownsville died of pneumonia. He was what you call an ordinary hill-billy, gentlemen, a poor farmer who lived by tilling the small fertile spots of land that lie in between those hills which constitute the Ozarks. But there was one rather peculiar mental twist in his make-up that was brought very forcibly to our minds, as well as to the minds of his relatives, following his death. This quaint old character, who was known in the general stores at Brownsville as Gold Sam, had for years been buying gold-pieces with silver and paper money, oftentimes paying as much as ten cents premium on a five-dollar gold-piece. Since he was a widower, and childless at that, no one ever knew exactly what he did with the gold-pieces that he bought, but every one who knew him believed that he was slightly touched on the subject of the precious yellow metal.

"But as I told you, old Sam—or Gold Sam—died on the 7th of September, thirteen months ago. And when his relatives, all poor hill-billies like himself, investigated his miserable shack, they came upon a mighty precious find concealed on a ledge in the chimney of his sitting-room. This find consisted of a brick of solid gold—evidently made from the melting up of the several thousand coins which he had been collecting in the past ten or twenty years. To give you an approximate idea of the size of this brick, I might tell you that it measured about six inches in length and about three inches in both width and depth.

"Well, the natural result was that Gold Sam's relatives set up a howl of delight at first; but a half-hour later they began to fight among themselves, and I honestly believe there would have been a complete Ozarkian feud in another twenty-four hours. But one of the coolest of the heirs hitched up a pair of mules, drove into town over seven miles of dry mud hills and rocks, and returned with the public administrator of Brownsville County and two deputy sheriffs. And the administrator, of course, in the name of the law, took formal possession of that gold ingot, the dilapidated shanty, and the few acres that Gold Sam had left behind him.

"The brick was brought back to town and naturally put in the safe-keeping of the bank in order that its value might be credited to the estate of Gold Sam. But we at the bank, altho we knew of course that American gold coin is 21.6 carat, or nine parts gold to one of copper, and altho we were able to weigh the thing very accurately, had no facilities for making a set of drillings and an accurate chemical test of the material to discover whether it was homogeneous thruout. So we merely credited the estate with the deposit of a brick of gold weighing 37 pounds, a certain number of odd ounces, grains, and tenths of grains, the exact fineness to be determined by a subsequent examination at the mint in St. Louis, 150 miles north of us.

"At this point let me digress long enough to tell you briefly—to give you an idea, perhaps—of the value of this hardened mass of melted gold coin. It's not necessary for me to go into exact figures, but assuming that it was 21.6 carat gold, its value could be calculated to run between $10,000 and $10,100. And, as it unfortunately happened, we were ultimately forced to pay over to the heirs of Gold Sam the amount of $10,024.17 on account of our loss of this precious article.

"Now I shall proceed to tell you the causes of that brick's disappearance. As I mentioned before, it was of no value to the bank in its form at that time, so arrangements had to be made for its transference to the mint at St. Louis, where a negotiable Government certificate could be obtained in its place. And since the brick came into the bank's custody on a Monday morning, since I myself had arranged to go to St. Louis on official

THE MARKS OF AGE

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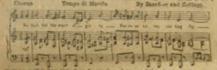

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business on the following Wednesday, and since our cashier, Mr. Charles Vandersloan, was overrushed with work on account of the movement of money in harvesting, it was quite natural that I should be the one to convey the heavy bar of metal to St. Louis.

"Now, as you may readily see for yourselves, I am a man of rather slight build and hardly able to cope with any sudden emergencies that might require the expenditure of unusual physical energy. And I really confess that, with the newspapers full of accounts in which bank messengers were assaulted and robbed, I did not relish the task of carrying that $10,000 bar of gold to St. Louis in the old bank-currency satchel that every one in town knew by sight. So Vandersloan and I, after talking the matter over, decided to vary the old procedure somewhat.

"A few days before, it seems, the general store in town had purchased a dozen or more small, black leather sample cases from a bankrupt leather firm in St. Louis. These cases were by no means unwieldy in size, they were made of good substantial leather, and they were not shaped at all like an ordinary valise. In fact, they might almost be considered to be lunch boxes.

"Enough to tell you that I secured one of these black leather cases from the general store, and Vandersloan and I made the ingot ready that same Monday afternoon so that I could take it with me to St. Louis on Wednesday morning, September 12th. We packed it, bottom, sides, ends, and top, with compact waddings of newspaper. And Vandersloan, according to the procedure which his cashier's position demanded of him, sewed the lips of the case together with wire and sealed the ends with a lead seal, much after the method of the express companies with valuable parcels. Then we secured a sheet of tough, brown wrapping paper and a ball of twine, and bound up the package so that when it was finished it resembled an ordinary, everyday parcel, except for its extreme weight of 37 pounds or so.

"But that Monday evening after the bank had closed, I was walking down Brownsville avenue, the chief residence street of our small village, and as I crossed the railroad tracks I passed this fellow cutting off from the railway to the town." Here Stillwell indicated the prisoner, Luke McCracken. "I naturally took a good look at him, because a stranger in a small town is always a source of interest, and then, too, my eye caught that odd criss-cross scar on his chin.

"But after I proceeded across the tracks and up to my own home, I forgot all about the fellow. Next day I was at the bank the greater part of the time, checking up some papers with Vandersloan and taking care of a number of things incident to my departure for St. Louis, since I intended to make a two-day visit with friends.

"And that night, gentlemen—the night of Tuesday, September 11th—was the night the Brownsville vault was blown open."

CHAPTER XXVII.

"YES," continued the immaculately clad bank official, "that was the night our $10,000 ingot changed hands without warning. And its disappearance was very mystifying, in spite of the fact that it was quite obvious how it had gone. But I will explain that statement.

"Brownsville, you know, lies on the St. Louis and Southwestern Texas Railway. There is only one passenger train thru there between 9 o'clock at night and 5 in the morning. That one takes water at the water tank at exactly 2 o'clock. And the last freight train for the night invariably passes thru at about midnight, bound for St. Louis.

"But here was the odd part. The citizens of Brownsville were awakened at twenty minutes past 3 in the morning by the sound of a terrific explosion at the bank. In spite of the fact that probably a dozen or more men were on the scene with rifles and shotguns within five minutes, the man or men who did the job had made a complete getaway. Now, since the last freight had passed thru at midnight, and the last passenger an hour and twenty minutes before the explosion, it was plain that an automobile had been in readiness near the bank, for this fellow with the scarred chin was nowhere to be found. And it was always a matter of speculation to me where that automobile had been hidden, and what make of car it was, for no one had seen it.

"When we reached the bank we discovered that the vault door was completely blown off. And when morning came it developed that the honorable gentleman there with the scar on his chin, who had been observed by many of the citizens besides myself, was missing. In fact, that was the last I or any one else ever saw of him again, until just now when I stepped into your office. And——"

"The satchel containing the gold ingot was missing," said Chief Callahan, "as I remember the case. But what else was gone in the way of currency?"

"The currency was in an inner compartment of the vault, which our friend over yonder did not have time to blow. And the only reason that he got away with the satchel was that it was too large to fit into the steel money receptacle. It had been left in the space between the secondary vault and the vault door, you see. Now, one——"

"Just a minute, Mr. Stillwell," broke in Jarrick, staring up at the ceiling. "I believe in your narrative you've overlooked a fact which was stated in the original telegraphic report of the crime sent out at that time. I am referring to the position of the combination dial on the wrecked safe door."

President Stillwell appeared surprised. "True enough!" he exclaimed. "True enough. I believe that something else was included in the original telegraphic notifications sent out. It had skipped my mind entirely. Are you referring to the fact that the combination dial had been moved almost to the point where it would have opened the door, had the blast not been set?"

"That was it exactly," said Jarrick. "On September 12th, a year ago, as I ran over the crime doings of the past twenty-four hours here in Mr. Callahan's office, I made a mental note of that fact and certain interpretations as they appeared to me. And for this reason the thing stuck in my memory, as it were, and caused me to notice the omission of it in your story."

"Great Jupiter!" exclaimed Callahan, with a laugh. "Does anything ever seep out of that memory of yours, Jarrick? I doubt it. But Mr. Stillwell is a busy man and we're probably delaying him. I beg pardon, Mr. Stillwell. Will you go on with your story?"

"No delay at all," remarked the little man, smiling. "Well, as I just remarked, the position of the rotating dials showed that at least one very clever individual had been working on the safe door, either by the sense of hearing or touch, and that he had almost struck the combination which would have made an explosive blast unnecessary. But he must have lost patience and decided that the cruder method of the common yeggman was preferable in order to get into the vault.

"And as I told you before, the townspeople, the marshal, the merchants, the men who were expected to deal with such emergencies as the unexpected visits of yeggs, found nothing but the sawed-off bars of the rear window when they reached the scene of the explosion. Whether one man, two, three, or four were concerned, there was absolutely no way of telling. But only one stranger had been in the village—and matters certainly pointed to his complicity in the crime. Yet, five minutes after the blast, he had disappeared as tho swallowed up by the earth. Neither a north, south, east, or west going posse found any traces of him or of an automobile.

"To continue: The information was flashed to all the police chiefs of the larger cities and the surrounding towns, as well as the description of the crisscross scar on this man's chin." President Stillwell looked toward McCracken, who was scowling sullenly at him. "I trust you will pardon my rather frank discussion of your appearance and features, my friend. It's personal, of course, but I'm doing it at the request of Chief Callahan." The little man, however, only scowled the harder. So Stillwell turned to the rest of the assemblage once more.

"From advice telegraphed back it was clearly ascertained that this fellow with the crisscross scar was no other than Luke McCracken, a man who had recently served a five-year term in the Nebraska State Penitentiary for a similar piece of work. But it seems that he was never captured until today, and I am wondering—wondering if——" He stopped. "But I digress, I fear.

"While the bank was fortunate in saving its currency, amounting to two or three thousand dollars, it was very unfortunate in having to make up to the heirs of old Gold Sam the approximate amount of the gold brick's value, which I already informed you was $10,024.17. But there was no way out of it. After a gloomy meeting of the directors, myself included, we were forced to subscribe amounts proportional to our respective holdings of the Brownsville bank stock. And I, now having the shares left me by my father, Mr. Roger Stillwell, was compelled to contribute a little over $2,500 to make up that deficit. And I tell you frankly, gentlemen, I was ill able to afford such an expenditure.

"At any rate, there is little left for me to relate, but what I shall tell you now will seem to constitute a peculiar fact, occurring as it has with the presence in Chicago of both McCracken over there and poor Vandersloan downstairs.

"Vandersloan, you know, gave in his notice to the board of directors last month. He complained that twenty-one years of cashiering between the Pacific coast and the Mississippi River had not aided his health any. He also announced his intention of leaving the bank's employ on Saturday noon—the one a week past—and of going to New York to enjoy a rest. And he stated that he expected to take up a position as a city salesman which had been offered to him by a boyhood friend in the East. Of course, this was a perfectly logical procedure, since the remuneration of a small town bank cashier is not very large. I can't say that I blamed him a bit for giving up that line of work. He——"

"Did his books check up perfectly?" asked Jarrick.

"They did. Every penny of the bank's

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funds was accounted for. He left in good standing with the Bankers' Protective Association, and with our best recommendation and good will all around. So now for the peculiar happening I mentioned, which—frankly—I do not believe was a coincidence.

"For some months previous to Vandersloan's departure for the East, a rather curious-looking individual had been employed in the town garage. This individual I speak of was known as Dummy Peters on account of the fact that there was some injury to his vocal cords which prevented his speech. What his correct name was I don't recall ever having heard. Dummy Peters, however, must have been an elderly man, for his glasses contained great, thick lenses and he wore a bushy, black beard. But he was a very good mechanic, and invariably gave satisfaction with every farmer's car he worked on. And here is the odd thing about the fellow. The night before Vandersloan left Brownsville, Dummy Peters dropped out of sight entirely and hasn't shown up since. Really, as I look at the matter now, I cannot help but believe that the black-bearded mechanic was deliberately trailing Vandersloan. Who knows? At any rate——"

At this point in President Stillwell's story, Luke McCracken suddenly leaned forward, thrusting one lean forefinger in the direction of Callahan.

"Chief," he snapped, "you guys got me backed to the wall on that Brownsville bank robbery. An' unless I come across wih my spiel I see myself gettin' sloughed with a ten-year stretch in the Missouri Big House. So I'll talk. I'll spill. I'll hand you guys th' rest o' th' tale. F'r I'm the black-whiskered guy what worked in the town garage and what blew out o' th' burg on the same train as that dirty, double-dealin' crook of a Vandersloan!"

This highly interesting story will be continued in next week's Ledger. Do not miss reading it. A lot of great and timely stories will appear in the Ledger during the coming months. Send in your subscription and you will find yourself repaid ten times over.

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The Film Impostor.

(Continued from Page 3.)

it up, you're going to get over. I know it."

The director had favored his star with some curious looks, but he was generous in praise of that first day's work; especially was he pleased when later in the day Maxwell recounted his wrongs to officers of the fort near by. These scenes taken at Fort Wright showed Donegan to good advantage.

That evening Harwood was the only member of the company who seemed to hold any coldness for the newcomer. Donegan, intent upon his own difficult role, ignored the other man's hostile attitude.

"Are you ready to grant that favor now?" Donegan asked the director, the evening of the fourth day's work. Everything had gone nicely and Richardson was in fine humor.

"Granted already," smiled the little man.

"I want to see that little Miss Burling get a fair show." When he had told what he knew of Strant and his ugly work, the warm-hearted Richardson leaped to his feet.

"New York can't make me a party to any such work. She goes on tomorrow for at least half time. You see that she is on hand for work."

Donegan had not called at the modest Lincoln street boarding-house since the first evening. Twice, however, he had telephoned progress.

The girl came into the shabby parlor a little shyly. "Your face is positively glowing," she smiled. "You must have pleased the mysterious people of 611."

"Not nearly so much as you will tomorrow when you join us." His good news, told with boyish abruptness because he could not keep back an impulse to see the brown eyes light up with delight, was rewarded.

Tears of joy could not dim those eyes for long, and the smiles he longed to see came readily enough to her lips now. Only at the last when he ventured to inquire if Strant had dared to molest her did the troubled look come back.

"I had word from home today that some one had revealed the hiding-place of the man I told you of. It must have been Strant. Fortunately the officers were too late. I am afraid of what will happen if the man recovers so that he can hunt Strant as that man has hunted him."

"I have an account to settle with Strant and one other," he said grimly. "I hope your—your friend leaves the brute to me. As sure as my name is Alonzo Edward Donegan that man threw me off the Golden Limited hoping that I would not be found in time."

There was a curious pallor in Thea's face. "Did you say Alonzo Edward were your first names? Were you ever by chance a miner?"

"Four years. Why?"

Now he noticed her lifeless tone and how the color had gone from her cheeks.

"What is it? You are ill?" he questioned.

"Excitement," she told him. "Excitement over the place you have got for me. Now I must remember that you are a busy actor and must not keep you longer."

Donegan felt himself dismissed and went away sorely disappointed. Just what had gone wrong he did not know, but he did know that the triumphal announcement of her good fortune had somehow fallen flat.

He did not know that a small figure was kneeling at the window to watch him leave, and that Thea Burling was sobbing over and over:

"Out of all the men in the world why was this man the one I must not love?"

This capital story will be concluded in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you if you send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

❧ ❧ ❧

Got the Chicken.

"Oh, dear," sighed Mrs. Jefferson, "I don't know how I am going to get along with Ambrosia."

"Fire her," replied Jefferson, shortly, not removing his eyes from the latest unauthenticated war news.

"Fire her! That's a pretty idea! How would I ever get along without her?"

"You were just saying you couldn't get along with her, and I was trying to help you out, dear. Has she been putting you in Dutch again?"

"She has placed me in a very embarrassing position."

"That is what I mean. I——"

"If you are going to keep interrupting me, I shan't tell you a word about it."

"If you didn't tell me you'd swell up and bust like a rubber balloon. Go ahead. I'll be the goat."

"It's about the Walterses. She 'phoned me this morning——"

"Walter Jones' wife?"

"No, silly. You know I haven't spoken to Mrs. Walter Jones for more than a month! It was Mrs. Walters; she 'phoned that she had a roast chicken and some stuffed potatoes for me, and that I should send Ambrosia over for them right away. So I said to Ambrosia: 'Run over to Walters' and get me the roast chicken she has for me,' and Ambrosia went."

"That is perfectly dreadful, so far. I believe you will recover, however."

"Please listen and don't try to be as funny as you look! That careless creature went over to Walter Jones' and told Mrs. Jones she had come for my roast chicken—are you laughing?"

"I should say not. And then what happened?"

"She told Ambrosia that she had no roast chicken for me. And Ambrosia replied: 'Yassum, Mis' Jones, yo' is,' and she sat down on Jones' step and remained there for an hour and a half. Oh, dear!"

"What did Mrs. Jones do?"

"She told Ambrosia to go along about her business, that she had nothing for her, but Ambrosia stuck and hung, and finally Mrs. Jones telephoned to the market and got a chicken and roasted it and gave it to Ambrosia. And just as Ambrosia came into the dining-room with it Mrs. Walters telephoned and wanted to know if I was never going to send after that chicken! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What ever shall I do?"

"And you got both chickens?"

"Yes, and Mrs. Jones telephoned that she was sorry we had fallen out, and that she and Walter were coming over here this evening. What in the world shall I do?"

"Invite the Walterses over to meet them, and serve a cold lunch of roast chicken. Walter's wife is all right; you had no business quarreling with her."

"I'd like to know what you would do if Walter imitated your bonnet——"

"Nobody imitates a last year's derby."

"I believe I shall do as you suggest, and maybe you will take all of us to a picture show afterward. But whatever shall I do with Ambrosia?"

"Scold her, and give her a half-dollar, as you usually do."

❧ ❧ ❧

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For Daughter's Sake

By James C. Threlfall

THE woman with hair like spun gold was going back to Clearview to her husband. Not because she loved him. She had never loved her husband. She had loved their child in a sort of fierce she-animal way, but never one-half so much as she had loved her own ease, and she had deserted the child when she left Clearview without a twinge of compunction or remorse.

However, one must eat; the roseate paths of turpitude are not always conducive to three meals per diem: Mrs. Moore had grown hungry for the Fairview fleshpots, and had written her husband. It was the fleshpots, not her daughter—certainly not her husband—which were bringing her back.

Because Margaret Doran had hair like spun gold John Moore had made love to her. Because he was a fool and couldn't see the cruelty and greed and lustings after the things of the flesh that God had placed for a warning in the depth of her gray-green eyes he had asked her to marry him. Because he was the most desirable catch in Clearview the woman had accepted.

She reread his letter as she sat in the swaying platform of the swiftly moving observation car.

"Dear Mary," he had written, "for the sake of the mother of my child I am sending you the money for your return ticket. I don't think she, herself, will receive any special benefit from your presence here. I don't think I will receive any benefit, and yet because you are Ruth's mother, I realize what the denial of a chance to you might mean to her in the years to come.

"She has been doing finely with Mrs. Taliaferro to look after her, and I think that she and I and possibly yourself would be better off if you were coming home in the baggage car instead of the Pullman.

"This is a harsh truth, and yet it is for its truth and not for its harshness that I mention it at this time. I shouldn't have gone into such details excepting for one thing: I want you to understand that I have no illusions left regarding yourself or your possible place in my life.

"Had your silence continued another six months I should have applied for a divorce, and then possibly Mrs. Taliaferro would have—but what's the use of talking of what might have been? I will meet you at the Sixteenth street depot. Until then.

"Sincerely,
"JOHN."

The woman ran her tongue over her lips and they formed into a sardonic smile. It was not a very affectionate letter. It did well enough for the occasion, however. When she had eloped brazenly with the violinist of the Clearview Theater she had forestalled any possibility of future affection from John.

Indeed, she had done that in the three years preceding the elopement, when she had bit by bit torn from her husband's soul his love for her and his trust in womanhood.

The train stopped for water, and another woman swished out on the vestibule.

"May I sit here, dearie?" purred the newcomer in softly modulated accents.

"Certainly," answered Mrs. Moore, looking up.

The "dearie" had prepared her to expect a woman of a certain type. She was not disappointed. The woman's face was marked with lines of dissipation. Her eyes were bloodshot from alcohol, and her finger-tips stained from the use of cigarettes. Her clothing was showy, and her figure was beginning to sag into the shapeless bloat that excess gives her votaries.

And yet Mrs. Moore's pulses quickened with astonishment, for allowing for slight externals, she could have thought herself gazing into a mirror. There was the same oval smoothness of contour, there was the same mercenary shadow in the depths of the gray-green eyes, and the hair that fluffed down in masses below the picture hat had the same magnificent aura of spun gold.

The two were of a height. The newcomer looked older, and yet, was she older, or had she merely traveled swifter milestones toward perdition than Mrs. Moore?

The newcomer noticed the resemblance as quickly.

"Hello, little sister. No? Yes?" she added, as Mrs. Moore remained silent.

She drew a cigarette-case from her traveling bag, as she seated herself, and lit one of the perfumed cylinders.

"I trust you will pardon me," she said, waving the cigarette questioningly. "Or, perhaps you will help me?"

Mrs. Moore said nothing.

The stranger shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, you don't smoke. Well, well, dearie, don't be offended. They're very soothing, and you will smoke them later and take them from worse hands than mine."

"For behold yourself as in a mirror," she said, drawing two pudgy hands down her carmined cheeks, "as you will be if you live long enough."

Mrs. Moore shuddered in spite of herself. The woman gave her an uncanny feeling. The staying outside on the rear of the observation car was unpleasant to her, and yet she stayed on.

The older woman unrolled a newspaper and immersed herself in its pages, while the train reeled off the crooked miles of rain-soaked track along the Little Blue.

"I thought so," she grunted, as she looked up. "My daughter's wedding is written up in this little sheet," she repeated. "I haven't seen her since I left her father."

"Indeed!" Mrs. Moore vouchsafed, in a bored tone of voice.

"Yes, indeed. Have you a daughter? I see you have, dearie. Well, I have gone the pace myself, but my daughter, she's a lady. Betcher life I didn't interfere with her chances. Nothing interferes with a daughter's chances like a crooked mother. She thinks I'm dead this many a year, and she can hold up her head with the best of them. Three columns of the wedding with a two-column picture of the bride. I guess that's going some." She leaned quite near the other to make herself heard. Her breath was reminiscent of brandy. "I guess that's going some," she repeated.

"If you insist with your familiarities, I shall have to go inside," said Mrs. Moore, rising.

The other woman, however, scrambled to her feet and brushed past her. "You had first place, dearie," she purred, "and if you don't want me round it's up to me to fade away."

There is some rough roadbed along the banks of the Little Blue. The train swayed from side to side in wormlike contortions. It all but upset the chair in which Mrs. Moore sat. It tore the other woman's hand from the doorknob and sent her reeling to the side of the car.

The car swerved to the other side, and the woman was thrown to the rear end, where she clutched desperately at the railing and was catapulted over it, disappearing from Mrs. Moore's sight.

To Margaret Moore it appeared ages before she was able to reach the bell-cord and summon the conductor, and then other ages before that worthy made his appearance and the train came to a standstill.

When the train had reversed its course to the point where the accident had occurred the woman's life was extinct. Tho a physician volunteered his services from among the passengers there was no need for examination. The head hung sidewise limply over one shoulder. The neck was plainly broken. So sudden had been the transition from life to death that a smile still lurked in a corner of the mouth.

"A friend of yours?" queried the conductor. "Or perhaps," as he noted the resemblance, "a sister?"

The woman shook her head. "Never saw her before in my life," she said.

"Quite a coincidence," continued the man. "Perhaps, since you were going to the same destination you will look after her belongings."

They restored the woman to the seat in the chair car which she had vacated for the observation car platform. The chair was thrown back for the reception of the corpse, which occupied it not unnaturally.

A few of the woman's belongings were in the rack above the seat, and the opened bag sat between the two seats. Mrs. Moore gathered the things into the bag and snapped it shut.

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The newspaper was still in the dead woman's hands. Mrs. Moore removed it, but it was not easy, for the fingers clutched tightly over it. She glanced down the lines of the wedding announcement. The girl had indeed been married into one of the leading families of the Western town in which she had been brought up.

The dead woman's boast rang in the reader's ears as she read: "Betcher I didn't stand in the way of my daughter's chances of being brought up a lady."

The society editor had touchingly referred in the account of the wedding to the mother. "How happily she must have looked down from above and given her sanction to the glorious event," she had said.

The reading of the account there in the presence of Death revealed Mrs. Moore's soul to herself as she had never allowed herself to consider it. Her daughter, her own daughter, was she not entitled to a chance? In lieu of the bride's face there seemed to peer from the printed page the face of the child. It called forth impulses Margaret Moore had seldom felt. She knew instinctively what her own life would be.

How much better off would the daughter be with a woman like Mrs. Taliaferro to mould her growing tendencies! How much better off for the daughter if the mother were coming home "in the baggage car," as John had said in his letter.

"Betcher life I didn't stand in the way of my daughter's chances of being brought up a lady." The words seemed to sound a crescendo above the clattering of the coach.

The other woman had been strong enough to give HER daughter a chance. Should she do likewise? Would she? If so she must move while under the influence of this moral idea.

Could she act now? In a flash she saw how the Fates had given her an opportunity to do so.

The train was slowing down for the Brockton street station. The next stop would be Sixteenth street, and John would be there in his motor-car to meet her.

A shifting of handbags was the first move of Mrs. Moore. The dead woman had no jewelry on her hands. She was unmarked with moles or distinguishing marks. John Moore would meet the train and make inquiries. If he found the dead woman with the satchel at her side, the satchel that his wife had carried when she left him, he would never know the truth.

There was no one in the coach to observe her. She walked hurriedly down the aisle.

The Fates continued to be good to her (or was it her daughter's chances in life they were guarding?), for the conductor's head was turned as she descended the steps and hurried away into the gathering night.

She knew not where she would lay her head that night, but her daughter should "have a chance."

* * *

PERPLEXING.

He was tall and strong and graceful;
So was she.
[illegible] was slender, gay and sunny,
[illegible] was he.
All their friends predicted mar[illegible]
With dispatch
Never was a couple better
[illegible] to match!

They were wedded when the autumn
Leaves were red
He in Main[illegible]
[illegible]
T[illegible] on a [illegible]
[illegible] and stout,
She, a grim and awkward husband
With the gout!

* * *

ALL WAS NOT LOST.

"It's no use," said Madge despondently, as Mary, who lived in the apartment downstairs, opened the door to let her in. "I was born under an unlucky star."

"What's wrong?" asked Mary, in as sympathetic a tone as she could muster on such short notice.

"Everything," groaned Madge, following her into the living-room and dropping limply into the first comfortable chair. "I've just experienced the tragedy of my [illegible]"

Mary wanted to laugh, but long service in the not entirely enviable capacity of Madge's confidante had taught her that it would be wiser not to do so. Therefore she murmured, "Poor dear!" discreetly enough, and set to studying her friend's new suit, while awaiting further developments. Suddenly she sat bolt upright.

"Madge Markham! Pumps! And in this weather!" she cried. "Wh[illegible] do you——"

"That's just it," interrupted Madge. "They're the cause of my trouble. [illegible] Horrid things!" She gave one foot a vicious little kick that sent one small patent leather contrivance sailing across the room. Then she tucked her foot under her and proceeded to unburden herself.

"To explain things, I'll have to [illegible] away back last summer when I first [illegible] John Hilliard up in Canada."

"Oh, I see," said Mary.

"I heard so much about him from Edith Thornton that I was crazy to know him before I'd ever seen him. I was sure that he was my ideal of what a man should be. I said [illegible] Edith and she took particular pains to disillusion me.

"'You're not his style at a[illegible]' 'Of course, you're a love, [illegible] too feminine for him. He likes sensible intellectual girls.'"

"Jealous thing!" said Mary, comfortingly.

"Yes, I do think it was hateful for her to say that, but I p[illegible] by it. I knew that I wa[illegible] intellectual and that I didn't always act aw[illegible] sensible, but I made up my mind that I could make a pretense at being both as well as a lot of other people do. When I saw John Hilliard my mind was made up.

"I gave up fluffy dresses and flirting and Frederick Linton. He was a dear too, and it certainly hurt me to snub him, but I knew that no one with a grain of sense would have him around. I took long tramps by myself, with 'The Origin of Species' under my arm and wasted hours in thinking up intellectual remarks on [illegible] and literature. I never [illegible] of them, tho. I was alw[illegible] bashful when Mr. Hilliard was around and I let him do most of the [illegible]"

"Men like that," said Mary wisely.

"He's different," [illegible] Madge "but anyway, he was nice to me while [illegible] up at the [illegible] and he hasn't altogether forsaken me since we came back to town. But now he'll never look at me again." Madge thereupon sent her other pump flying across the room after the first one. "Just because I was [illegible] enough to think my feet looked [illegible] in pumps."

"Perhaps he didn't notice," suggested Mary.

"Notice! [illegible] losed. I was hurrying fit to kill. Well, [illegible] and. [illegible]

"W[illegible]

[illegible] tho the[illegible] but both my pumps [illegible] in sight stopped and [illegible] around and pick them [illegible] them on. The men [illegible] women sniffed, and the fat person whom I'd grabbed scolded. I w[illegible] simply panic-stricken with shame and confusion.

"Well, I don't [illegible] John Hilliard has to d[illegible]

"Wait. As if things weren't bad enough already, the first person I saw when I [illegible] John Hilliard, [illegible] the crowd on the sidewalk. I didn't wait [illegible] any more. I turned and fled! I [illegible] he'll never again have anything [illegible] with me. Don't [illegible] dear, but I really cared—this time."

The doorbell rang, and [illegible] answer i[illegible]

"Kin I leave this [illegible] a voice in the hall. "There's no [illegible]"

[illegible]

"It's for you, Madge," she [illegible]

[illegible] door [illegible]

"M[illegible] glad that [illegible]

* * *

[illegible] charms.

[illegible] horseshoe brooch [illegible] a fou[illegible]

"I [illegible] she was a [illegible] charm[illegible]"

No Money In Advance

This Marvelous CAMERA On FREE TRIAL!

Only 10,000 of these marvelous, instantaneous picture-taking and making cameras to be sent out absolutely on approval without a penny in advance just to prove that it is the most wonderful invention—the camera sensation of the age. So **you** must send for it **quick!** Just think of it—the new Mandel-ette

Takes and Makes Finished Pictures INSTANTLY!

You press the button, drop card in developer and in **one minute** take out a **perfect, finished** post card photo 2½x3½ inches in size. Camera, itself, is about 4½x5x7 inches. Loads in daylight 16 to 50 post cards at one time.

No Films—No Plates—No Dark Room

Not a bit of the muss and bother of the ordinary Kodak or camera. It is instant [illegible] photography! Universal focus lens produces sharp pictures at all distances. Pictures develop and print automatically. Can't overdevelop. Results positively amazing.

Better Pictures—Less Bother

I re[illegible] Mandel-ette Outfit yesterday and after try[illegible] it out today, I must indeed express my astonishment at the work that can be done with it. The first three pictures that I had taken were better than most of the snap shots that I took with a film camera, and there is much less bother and work in making the pictures. I have shown it to a number of people today and I am sure that you will be able to sell at least 75 or 100 here if you would have some way of demonstrating the goods. I am going to show my outfit to everyone that I meet and you can rest assured that I will do my best in boosting your wonder camera.
I. M. BROWN, Poplar Bluff, Mo.

Wouldn't Sell It At Any Price

I received my Mandel-ette and am much pl[illegible] I took some pictures and [illegible] it was a cloudy day, they came [illegible] I wouldn't sell the camera at a[illegible]
[illegible]

Surprised At Fine Pictures

I am making some fine pictures with no trouble at all. All who see my Mandel-ette Camera say that it is fine and they are surprised when I make a perfect picture in one minute.
WALTER G. HERMAN, Newber[illegible], Ore.

We Trust You

No difference who you are, where you live or what your age, we will send you the complete Mandel-ette outfit absolutely on approval and give you ten days to test it. If not satisfactory return it. But when you see what elegant pictures it takes—so quick, so easy, with no trouble at all—if you wish to keep it you simply send us $1 per month until our special price of only $5 is paid.

Easy Payments—No Reference

No red tape of any kind. Monthly payments so small you'll not notice them. Simply fill out and send coupon today. Send no money. No references required. Lots of fun and big profits.

No Experience Required

Plain instructions and everything complete with outfit so you can begin taking pictures the moment it arrives. We guarantee that even a child can operate it. Mail coupon now. No risk or obligation to keep camera.

Chicago Ferrotype Company,
Desk 320 Ferrotype Bldg.,
Chicago, Illinois

Friend Sends Order

My Mandel-ette arrived early Saturday morning O. K. Thirty minutes after it arrived I took my first picture and it was a great success. Any person after mastering your simple instructions should get good results with your Mandel-ette. I don't see how I ever got along without one.
After I had unpacked mine, my friend, Theo. Murdoch, New Petersburg, Ohio, came along and he was so enthused over it he sent for one the same morning. Several more of my friends are thinking of [illegible]ding for Cameras in the near future.
HERMAN K. STOEBEL, Greenfield, Ohio.

No Chance For Mistake

Your special outfit reached me by express this morning. It sure is all you claim it to be and there is no danger of my sending it back, as the first picture I took was of my wife and two children and it is the best I have [illegible]
That was the first time in my life that I have ever tried to take a picture, in fact, it is the first time that I have ever used a camera of any kind and by following your instructions in the [illegible] there is no chance to make [illegible]
[illegible] WEST, Louisville, Ky.

$18.00 In Two Days

[illegible] to say that I am well pleased with [illegible] I am using my Mandel-ette this [illegible] Bedford County Fair. I have [illegible] $18 so far with my Mandel-ette [illegible]

Make It Pay In 2 or 3 Hours

I received your camera O. K. a[illegible] pleased with it. I have already made some dandy pictures and I am sure I can make it pay for itself in two or three hours. Enclosed find orders for more cards.
[illegible]

Camera Success—Want Agency

[illegible] have bought one of your M[illegible] and found it to be very su[illegible] picture. I wish to make application to become y[illegible] I have several young men here [illegible] and I will send you their orders [illegible]
[illegible], Colo.

More Than Paid For Itself

I am very pleased with the Mandel-ette Camera. I h[illegible] pictures with it and it has already more than paid for itself.
F. MEARS, Jasonville, Ind.

Chicago Ferrotype Company,
Desk 320 Ferrotype Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Send me at once complete model Mandel-ette outfit including supply of post cards and instructions. I agree to examine and test it thoroughly and if satisfied pay you $1 a month until your special price of $5.00 is paid, otherwise I will return it at the end of 10 days.

Name

Street and No.. ....

Town

"... his creditors like that!"

FEROCIOUS APPETITE.

His forage Mars declines to cease.
He's always on the job.
He wants to grab the Dove of Peace
And eat it for a squab.

Some Weight.

Redd "How much does his automobile weigh?"

Greene "You mean with the mortgage?"

Making Monkeys of Mexicans

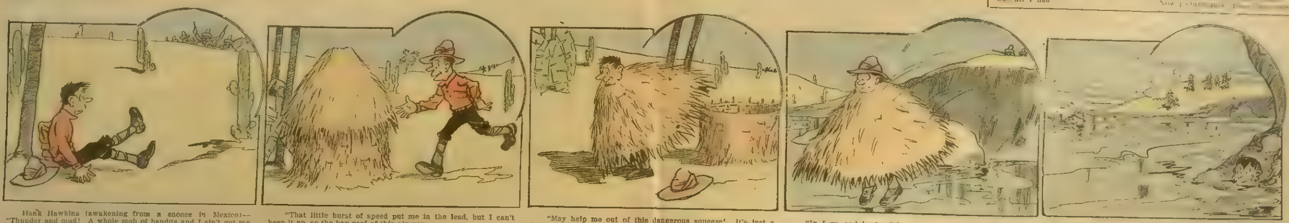
No Tony Disease for Him.

"So the doctor said you were as sound as a dollar."

"Yes; I had previously told him that was all I had."

STRANGE TRANSFORMATION.

The patient brute whose hide we use
For footwear would be dazed to know
That he suppl[illegible]
Now [illegible]



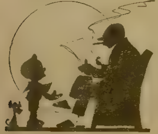
Hank Hawkins (awakening from a snooze in Mexico)—"Thunder and mud! A whole mob of bandits and I ain't got my gun!

"That little burst of speed put me in the lead, but I can't keep it up, so the hay-roof of this pig-pen——

"May help me out of this dangerous squeeze! It's just a few more jumps to the river and——

"In I go, and by leavin' my hat to cover the peak of the hay-roof I'll give 'em——

something to shoot at, while I swim under water, to the other side of the Rio Grande and safety! Ha! Ha!"



"Pa, I heard Uncle William say that he had hatched out a scheme. How could he do that?"

He probably had his mind set on [illegible]

Reassuring Himself.

An Easterner was touring Illinois in his car and had several mishaps. His wife's curiosity being excited by a certain proceeding of his in this relation, she finally asked:

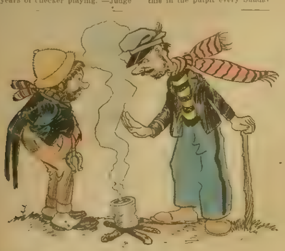
"I notice that every time the car breaks down you [illegible] out your State license and examine it very carefully. Why do you do that?"

"For encouragement, my dear," replied the motorist. "The license states that I am competent to operate the machine."

The Awful Part.

"War is terrible!"

"That's a fact!" replied the proprietor of the Tote Fair store at Petunia. "Why, dadburn it, the strategists have whittled up and ett up as many of my dry goods boxes and sody crackers since the war began as they would have done in twenty years of checker playing."—Judge



"I heard a fellow say dis mornin' dat he wasn't happy unless he was workin'."

"Ain't it a terrible t'ing when habits git hold of er man?"

A Narrow Escape.

It was the old lady's first visit to the cinematograph. For a long time she gazed in silent awe at the wonders of the screen, where all sorts of impossible things took place.

She could hardly believe the evidence of her own eyes. These things were real—they were actually happening. She stared with goggling eyes as miracle succeeded miracle.

Then a motor car appeared on the screen, coming into sight in the distance, and racing along a country road at about a mile a minute straight out of the picture at the audience.

Catastrophe seemed inevitable, and she shrank back in her seat. Then, just at the critical moment, it swerved aside and dashed out of sight.

The old lady rose firmly to her feet, ignoring the protests of those behind her.

"Come along, Annie," she said to her youthful niece, "it ain't safe here. That thing only missed me by a few inches."

Confiding in Her.

A local preacher, who was in the habit of taking his wife with him to his preaching appointments said on arrival at the chapel: "My dear, you go in there, you will be all right. I must go round to the vestry."

In the vestibule the wife was met by a kind hearted steward, who after giving her a hearty welcome and a hymnbook, conducted her to a comfortable seat. At the close of the service the same kind-hearted steward gave her a hearty shake of the hand, adding how pleased he would be to see her at the service each Sunday.

Then, whispering, he said: "But let me tell you, we don't get a duffer like this in the pulpit every Sunday."

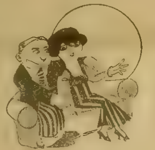
For His Tombstone.

The weather man lay dying; it was only a matter of a few hours, the doctors said.

Motioning to his sobbing friends, he waited until they had crowded around his bed to listen to his last words.

He gave careful directions for the disposition of his belongings, and outlined the general features of his funeral, then he murmured:

"And I want you to put up a nice tombstone for me, with these words carved on it: 'Probably Cooler.'"—Judge



[illegible] it is to be a secret engagement, dearest, it would not be wise for me to give you a ring at present."

She—"Oh, but I could wear it on the wrong hand, you know."

On Dangerous Ground.

Historical controversies are creeping into the schools. In a New York public institution attended by many races, during an examination in history the teacher asked a little chap who discovered America.

He was evidently thrown into a panic and hesitated, much to the teacher's surprise, to make any reply.

"Oh, please, ma'am," he finally stammered, "ask me somethin' else."

"Something else, Jimmy? Why should I do that?"

"The fellers was talkin' 'bout it yesterday," replied Jimmy. "Pat McGee said it was discovered by an Irish saint. Olaf, he said it was a sailor from Norway, and Giovanni said it was Columbus, an' if you'd 'a' seen what happened you wouldn't ask a little feller like me."

A Good Guess.

Miss Hathaway, teacher in a country school, always tried to make the lessons as interesting as possible to her little pupil.

"Now, children," she said, "you have named all the domestic animals but one. Who can tell me what that one is?"

Silence reigned.

"What!" cried the teacher. "Does no one know? Now, think! It has bristly hair, is fond of the dirt and likes to get in the mud."

One little boy at the end of the class raised a timid hand.

"Please, ma'am," he said reflectively, "it's me."

Had No Opportunity.

"You're a swindler," exclaimed Mrs. Gobb, as she entered the bird store. "You're worse than a highway robber. You ought to be ashamed of yourself to cheat a poor, innocent woman the way you did. That parrot I bought of you last week is a fraud. You said it was a fluent talker, and you charged me a big price for him, too, and that bird hasn't said a single word. Do you hear me? Not—one—single—word!"

"Perhaps," suggested the bird fancier, "you didn't give him a chance."

A Heartfelt Wish.

Billy, who had been having trouble with his older cousin Ralph, came into the house. His mother, knowing nothing of the trouble, said:

"Billy, what would you like to give your cousin Ralph for his birthday?"

"I know what I'd like to give him," said Billy, savagely, "but I'm not big enough."

A Night Hawk.

"That boy of yours seems a brisk young fellow. He'll make a name for himself in business some day."

"I hope so," answered Mr. Cobbles, thoughtfully.

"You don't seem to have confidence in him."

"Well, to tell the truth he doesn't exhibit much liveliness until about 6 p. m. and most of the business houses are closed after that time."

Nothing Doing.

A colored party named Rastus was sitting on the front step of his home smoking a corncob pipe, when one of the deacons of the A. M. E. church came along. Stopping in front of the house, the deacon said he wished to see Rastus on important business.

"Yes, sah, yes, sah," responded Rastus, slowly moving toward the gate. "What kin I do foh you, Mistah Smith?"

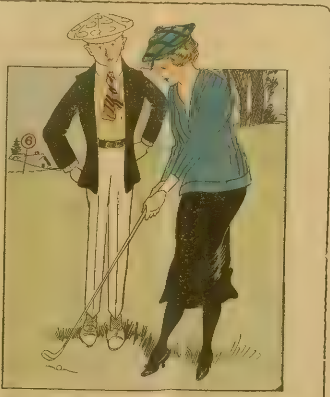
"We am gittin' up a mission band, Mistah White," answered the deacon, "and we would like yo' to jine. W[illegible]"

"Nothin' doin', Mistah Smith! Nothin' doin'!" answered Rastus. "Yo know berry well dat I kaint eben carry a tune on a mouf organ."

A Center of Letters.

"What's the leading industry of Crimson Gulch?" inquired the stranger.

"Literature," replied Broncho Bob. "If you don't believe it look at this here bunch of minin' prospectuses."



He—"I'd rather play golf than eat."

She—"But what does your wife say to that?"

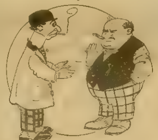
He—"Oh, she doesn't care. She'd rather play bridge than cook."

The Resourceful Peddler.

"Now, what do you want?" asked the sharp-tempered woman. "I called to see if I could sell you some bakin' powder, ma'am," said the seedy gentleman with the staggering whiskers.

"Well, you can't sell no bakin' powder here, and I ain't got no time to waste on peddlers anyway."

"Come to think of it, madam," said the seedy gentleman, as he fastened his bag, "I wouldn't care to sell you any powder. This poky little kitchen of yours is so low in the ceilin' that the bread wouldn't have no chance to rise."



[illegible] $20 check for me, [illegible]

Abrams—"I wouldn't cash a $20 bill for you, Ben, mitout sending it to der U. S. treasury first."

Proof to the Contrary Required.

An English officer who had been, thru mistake, reported "killed in action," on his return from the front went to his bank to cash one of his checks. The clerk at the counter, instead of asking the welcome question, "How will you take it?" looked doubtful and puzzled, stared at the soldier, and finally hurried away to seek advice elsewhere. He presently returned with the news that the check could not be cashed.

"But you know me, and that is my signature!" exclaimed the astonished officer.

"M—yes," said the clerk hesitatingly, "but the fact is, sir, that you're—dead, you see, and I'm told we shall require you to give proof to the contrary before we can pay the money."

Why He Didn't Speak.

The defendant in a case tried in a Western court had been duly convicted of theft, when it was seen, on "proving previous convictions," that he had actually been in prison at the time the theft was committed.

"Why didn't you say so?" angrily demanded the judge of the prisoner.

"Your honor," said the man apologetically, "I was afraid of prejudicing the jury against me."

Precautions.

"Goodness, Maria, why are you hiding all the music so carefully?"

"Well, John, the Puffers are calling on us tonight and you know Mrs. Puffer never plays without music."

An Inappropriate Air.

Mr. Tompkins is a hard-working man at his trade as a shoemaker. By laboring early and late he managed to earn enough to educate and dress his two daughters very well.

Now, he was so proud of those girls that, at last, as a surprise, he bought them a piano. A few days after the arrival of the instrument a friend saw him.

"Hello, Tompkins!" he said. "And how did the piano go off?"

"Beautifully, Smith," replied the shoemaker; "the girls were as grateful as possible, and it's fine to hear them singing and playing. But what do you suppose was the very first tune they learned?"

"Dunno, I'm sure," was the friend's reply.

"'Everybody Works but Father,'" said Tompkins mournfully.

They Come and Go.

Uncle Mose was making a great fuss while trying to round up a lot of hens and roosters that had escaped from their pen in his back yard.

"Why all the excitement?" asked a good-natured passer by.

"Ah want to git 'em all back in right away," exclaimed Uncle Mose.

"But why not wait until evening? Chickens come home to roost."

[illegible] 'rep[illegible] dey go [illegible]

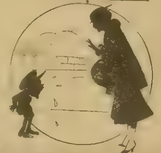
Not So Reckless.

"You say you have quit smoking."

"Yep, never going to smoke again."

"Then why don't you throw away those cigars?"

"Never! I threw away a box of good cigars the last time I quit smoking and it taught me a lesson."



Mother—"I'd have been ashamed to behave like you do when I was your age."

Kid—"You never was my age, you was always older'n me. You was [illegible]"

The Doctor's Prescription.

"Doctor," said he, "I'm a victim of insomnia. I [illegible] sleep if there's the least [illegible] cat on the back fence [illegible]"

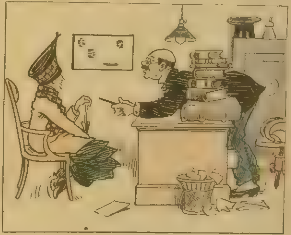
"This powder will be effective," replied the physician, after compounding [illegible]

[illegible] You give it to the [illegible]

Sorry for Him.

"I think I may say that I have never made any real enemies," remarked the complacent man.

"I'm sorry for you," replied Miss Cayenne. "It seems to make [illegible] unpopular to be entirely [illegible]"



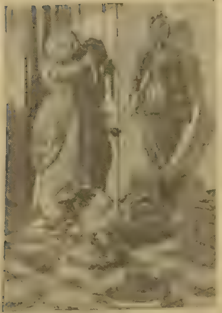
Lawyer—"Then I understand that after your husband had made over all his money to you, you left him?"

Client—"Yes; I couldn't live with a man who cheats his creditors like that!"

THE JEWELS OF JEZEBEL

Or, The Last Days of a King

By T. C. Harbaugh



"One for Duke Philip and one for the poor King!"

[Copyright 1916 by W. D. Boyce Co.]

Begun in No. 16, April 15. Subscriptions can begin with that issue or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO months passed, and two men came back as it were from the dead. Louis of Orleans, whom Queen Isabel found at last, was cured of his wound, and Duke Philip stepped from the house of the Devil's Sister with but little trace left of the rapier stab in the back.

Charles VI. was mad and sane alternately, but all Paris knew that erelong the cry: "The King is dead! Long live the King!" would be heard everywhere.

The Queen had but partly recovered from the surprise which saluted her when, instead of the jewels of Jezebel in the silver casket, she had beheld the deadly glitter of serpent eyes. Of course it was the King's work. He must have made the substitution, and this had widened the gulf between them.

One night a man might have been seen leaning over one of the bridges of the Seine gazing down upon its historic waters which had so many secrets not known to man. He was richly dressed, his crimson doublet had gold buttons, and his trousers, reaching only to the knees, were of a mottled green. A black plume set off his velvet hat to advantage, and his figure told that he was a man of strength, tho he had reached middle life. His wan and sunken cheeks told that he had lately passed thru the shadow of sickness, and there was little about him to tell those who knew him that he was Duke Philip. In his abstracted mood he did not seem to notice the boats that passed and repassed beneath him.

Not long after he had taken up his station a figure which kept within the shadows gradually approached him. Philip saw it not. He was unaware of the man's presence until a hand was laid on his arm and then he turned quickly, [illegible] time touching the rapier at [illegible]

"M[illegible]" said a voice which quivered.

"The King!"

The recognition was mutual.

"I do not count you among the wolves," continued Charles, drawing nearer to Burgundy. "I am not going to put you, my lord, among the devil's minions."

"[illegible]ad am I to hear that, your majesty," returned Burgundy. "My blade is your[s]"

The King smiled sadly yet gratefully. "Even kings need sympathy sometimes."

"Sympathy and advice."

"You are right, my lord. But as to the advice you hint at."

"You want it, then?"

"By the saints I do!"

"Then use a mailed hand," said Philip, with his oldtime fierceness. "Crush the plotters, crush them at once! Strike as never a monarch struck before. The wolves are closing in upon you. Forestall them. You are yet King. The heavens now filled with lightning will fall upon your head; then it will be too late."

Charles turned his face away and looked down upon the water.

"Strike from the highest to the lowest."

"I have struck," answered Charles VI., with a smile. "It was hard for me to [illegible] but I dared not withhold the sword. [illegible] was near to me. Prince Louis——"

"Had your majesty been here an hour ago you would have seen him ride by in his landau."

A quiver shot thru the King's frame.

"It cannot be!" cried he, fixing his eyes upon the Duke. "Louis is now in the other world."

"He is if he has been attacked within the hour."

Charles ran his hand over his seamed face and remained silent for a minute.

"Strike or be struck!" exclaimed Philip. "Count on the blade of Burgundy."

"Then by the soul of Saint Cecilia," cried Charles, clinching his almost transparent hands, "I will strike. Yet this night the blow shall fall. I swear it, my friend. Before dawn I will have swept all my enemies from my path. I will not spare the Queen, and as for Orleans and the rest——"

He paused again and looked down upon the waters of the placid Seine while a gleam of vengeance filled the eyes of the Burgundian duke.

"Wilt go with me to the palace?" Charles asked. "You shall see the order of arrest and you may help me indite it."

The two turned away [illegible] time entered the royal palace [illegible] Then by the light Philip saw [illegible] changed the King was. He looked like one about to be shrouded for the grave, but the instant he put his pen to paper his hand was as steady as a woodman's. Philip watched him write with breathless interest.

"Is it well done?" asked Charles, pushing the parchment toward his companion.

"It is all sufficient save in one particular," was the reply. "Your majesty has omitted one rebel."

King Charles looked up without speech.

"You have omitted one Arnace de Plessis," returned Philip. "A man of my own country is he and against the King."

"[illegible] But lately he offered me his sword."

"[illegible]"

"H[illegible]

He is the lover of Odette."

"Say you so?" and the King broke into a ripple of laughter.

"I can swear it, your majesty."

The King drew the order of arrest toward him and added to it the name of De Plessis.

"If the girl sees this," said Burgundy, "all the fish will not be fried."

"No one shall see it but the grand marshal," was the answer, as Charles transferred the order to his doublet. "The Queen has recovered the silver casket, but instead of the jewels of Jezebel she found the deadliest thing that [illegible] wis. It was a trick of mine."

"But she was not bitten?" cried Philip.

"No, she must have killed the little death viper, for its blood was found on the floor of her boudoir."

"And the casket?"

"It once more holds the deadly gems."

When Philip of Burgundy bade the King good night the mad monarch settled back into his chair and closed his eyes. He did not hear the door which slowly opened nor see the face that confronted him. Odette, all smiles that she had surprised the King, glided softly into the chamber, and was about to awaken him when her eyes chanced to fall upon the paper which lay before him. She read it with a white face and distended eyes.

"What," thought she, "Arnace among the victims? This shall never be. The hand of Charles shall not rob me of him ere he goes to his Maker. Who put this fiendishness into the King's mind? Did not Arnace swear allegiance by his sword, and is not his word as good as his bond? No, no!"

She stole across the chamber and found a doublet hanging on the wall. To make this discovery was to make another, and she drew forth a dagger with a needle's point. She came back to the sleeping monarch and looked down upon him with murder in her eyes.

The shining blade was tightly clutched in her hands, and she raised it slowly aloft till it scintillated above the sleeper's head. How steady her hand was now and yet her eyes so full of pity! One downward stroke and Charles of France would sleep on forever!

But all at once Odette's hand fell downward to her side. She restored the weapon to the doublet and came back to the one almost her victim.

Picking up a pen, she drew a line thru De Plessis' name, and then, folding the order of arrest, placed it softly in the King's inner pocket. Stooping lower, her lips touched the King's brow, causing him to open his eyes. The moment he beheld his favorite a smile of welcome settled on his wan face and he took her in his arms.

"The only friend I have in the world," cried the mad King, embracing her. "I wish I could leave the world to you, my Odette."

[illegible]

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"And that will be thru all eternity," answered the King.

It was late when Odette, slipping down the secret stair, stopped now and then and clasped her hands upon her wildly beating heart

"What if he should notice the change in the royal order?" Odette gasped. "What if he should add again the name to the terrible list? The order is to be carried out tomorrow night. I must find Arnace and warn him

She rushed thru the streets of Paris like one demented. She found a certain house and entered without knocking. A few bounds carried her up a stairway and into a dimly lighted room. A young man lying on a cot opened his eyes and smiled upon her.

"You must leave Paris at once, love" she cried "I have deceived the King for love of you. Death will reign in Paris tomorrow night. You must go. Your name is in the death order, tho I have scratched it off. The King may see and replace it

"But my sword belongs to Charles of [illegible]"

"But the King is a madman," persisted Odette.

Something flushed up in De Plessis' eyes.

"Mad or sane," he exclaimed, "I will not go! I have a rapier which has never deceived me."

"But the King's power?"

"My love, you roused me from a terrible dream. Tomorrow night there will be no Charles VI."

"My God!" wailed the girl

"I believe in visions," continued De Plessis, kissing her. "I am for the King, and the man who caused my name to be added to the death list shall feel the point of the De Plessis rapier, and be summoned before his God before his time!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

IF ODETTE had paused on her way home at a certain window on the ground floor of a certain house, after her visit to De Plessis, she would have seen a man seated at a fire alone. This personage was the Duke of Burgundy

On a table back of him lay an unsheathed rapier and beside it the hat with the black feather. The golden buckles of his shoes shone brightly in the firelight, and his garments made him look the great ambitious duke he was.

He was keeping company with his thoughts. Tomorrow night Paris would ring with startling news. The Queen would be banished, the Prince of Orleans arrested for treason, which meant death, other nobles would be in his company, and De Plessis would follow them to the same ignominious doom. Then would come his triumph, then would he be, next to the mad King, the greatest man in France, and he would virtually control the kingdom.

These were glorious thoughts that night. Charles had made him his confidant, and he would stand behind the throne, conduct the English war, winning battles for France, and leave to posterity a name that would live forever in history.

The woman called the Devil's Sister, whose secret history he well knew, had nursed him back to life. He owed to her medicines the oldtime strength that was his again, and he longed to meet Orleans and spit him as a hunter does a wild boar

Sweet thoughts these for Philip, as he sat by his fire with the soft light upon him and no one to interfere. The encounter could not come too soon for him. He longed for the hour, longed for it as a child longs for pastry, and while he thought of his coming vengeance a smile passed over his pale face and caused his heart to throb.

When he was the King's master Odette should go. He hated the girl because she hated him, and he would find means to pull her from her high estate and toss her among the wolves of Paris.

For more than an hour the Duke sat there communing with his thoughts. The fagots on the hearth burned low, and, falling to pieces, sent showers of sparks up the wide chimney.

Suddenly he turned his face toward the window. His alert senses had heard a noise there. To look was to leap to his feet and snatch the rapier from the table. His eyes got a sudden flash as his right hand curled around the hilt with the quickness of a serpent. That instant the sash crashed inward and four men in black velvet were in the room.

Four blades told Philip the purport of the intrusion. Knitting his pallid lips, he sprang behind the table, thus transforming it into a breastwork, and there he awaited the attack like a wounded wolf at bay.

A lamp on the wall threw its light over the scene, revealing to Philip the four men from head to foot, Orleans' minions as his heart told him. They had found their prey.

The mien of the hunted man seemed for a minute to disconcert them. They stopped in front of him and glared like tigers, wondering how best to attack this man who would sell his life as dearly as possible.

"I ask not whence ye came," said Philip, the first to break the strenuous silence. "I know who sent ye hither. The impress of his rascality is set on each face. He did not have to label you to tell me that you come from Louis of Orleans. If ye are not cowards, as ye are the devil's quartet, advance and let the fight be on."

These words which constituted the hunted one's defiance brought curses from the lips of the four. Philip held them at a disadvantage, for he had the heavy table in front of him, and for one to leap across it would be to make a rapier's anchor of his heart.

"You came to kill, why don't you go at your butcher's work?" taunted the Duke. "Your venial master was too cowardly to lead you. I brand him traitor to France, he the King's brother and my sword is eager to find the bl[illegible]est heart in the kingdom"

The men looked at one another and growled The next second there was a sudden rush, the foremost man got half way across the table, to stagger back his heart cut in twain, while the Duke withdrew his reddened rapier with a laugh

In another instant it was the beginning of a fight to the finish. It was thrust and parry with all the viciousness of inborn hatred and the meeting of steel rang thruout the room. A second [illegible] went down like the first, in whose blood the great Duke slipped and staggered back

The supreme moment for the Orleans contingent had come. Philip, recovering his equipoise for a second, thrust with all his impetuosity; he drove the rapier thru a shoulder, but it was his last mad thrust.

A rapier darted heartward with the rapidity of lightning, the blade so valiantly gripped by the Duke fell jingling to the floor, and the two again and again drove their steel into the quivering body.

"A man like that deserved a better death," commented one of the twain, as he coolly wiped his steel. "But the Prince would have it so, and thus it must be."

They stooped over the yet quivering body and robbed it of the gold shoebuckles, they stripped the buttons from his velvet surtout, and then, with the deliberateness of finished murderers, kicked the corpse of the great Duke under the table. There would be no triumph for Philip of Burgundy on the night of arrest; there would be no triumph for him to stand behind the throne and guide the destinies of France

When the survivors of the one-sided fight left the house they took their dead with them. They found a cart hard by, and threw the bodies into it, ordering the countryman to throw them into the Seine. From there, with Philip's blood on their velvet, they sought out a cafe and drank the health of their master

There was nothing more for them to do under the circumstances, and as the night deepened and the wind sprang from its abode with fury, a lot of leaves found the window and gently covered Duke Philip as with a shroud

After midnight Orleans was wakened from his slumbers by a heavy knocking. He heard the lower door open, and then footsteps came up the stair. Grasping his sword, he placed himself on the defensive with his eyes on the door

The half-drunken wretches reeled into the light

"We've plucked our pigeon," stammered one, laughing like a fiend of Tophet. "The Duke of the black feather is no more."

"But I sent four of ye upon the quest."

The human ghouls looked querulously at one another

"Aye, but you did, Prince, but he fought like a tiger."

Orleans understood.

"Then," said he, smiling, "there will not be so many to share the prize."

Orleans took out his purse and poured its golden contents upon the table.

"Take it all and divide it afterward. I must have my nap out," and he saw the villains depart with a look of scorn.

Did he have his nap out? What meant all that tossing on his pillow? What meant the sudden startings from his sleep and his incoherent outcries?

His enemy was dead! Philip of Burgundy slept peacefully, their rivalry over. But what was in the future for him? Could he have looked behind the curtain of destiny and foreseen his own end, he might have wished himself where Philip was. The pendulum of life was swinging slowly, and the hand of retribution was guiding it.

The next day he rode past the house of death. He saw the broken window and noted the silence which reigned there. Filled with curiosity he dismounted from his carriage and looked into the room. A leaf-shrouded body lay on the floor at the foot of the table. One look was enough

One of those fortune tellers who thronged Paris stood before him. Orleans tried to brush her aside

"Twenty francs for thy horoscope which I cast last night," cried the seeress. "Twenty francs are not much for one to know what the stars speak of him."

"Twenty francs you shall have, but to perdition with your horoscope!" exclaimed Louis, throwing the money at her feet

"Beware a woman!" cried the seeress after him. "The stars never lie. Be[illegible] woman, Louis of Orleans, and [illegible]od pity you!"

[illegible] time Louis was in his carriage, which was thundering over the street, and as he leaned back among the velvet cushions which bore his crest, he laughed at the prediction that he could not thrust from his mind.

CHAPTER XIX.

DE PLESSIS listened for a while to Odette's footfalls, and knew that the girl was gone Was it true what she had told him? Had the King in a fit of madness proscribed one who had off[illegible]ed

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him his swor[illegible] as he to perish with the rest?

He would not quit Paris come what might. With his rapier he would resist the order of arrest if Charles had restored his name to the death list. Some one had put this terrible thought into the King's head, and he conned the list of those who might have done so. At length he paused at the thought of Duke Philip.

[illegible] the great Duke hated him he well knew, for he had failed to carry out his plans concerning the woman known to him [illegible] was not too late to reckon with this man of evil.

De Plessis sprang to his feet and felt the point of his best companion. It had never failed him. He would seek Duke Philip at his own house and have it out with him. He could at least have the satisfaction of sending into eternity the man who had whispered wrong about him in the King's ear, and that would be vengeance.

In half an hour De Plessis stood in front of the Burgundian's house. The first thing that caught his eye was the broken window, a marvelous thing to him. Then he sprang into the porte cochere and tried the door, which readily opened before him.

He was in the adjoining room in another moment, and there he [illegible] at the leaf-covered body on [illegible]. Dark and murderous work had been done there; he saw it in a moment.

The Duke had been slain after a desperate struggle, and the storm had woven for him a shroud of leaves. De Plessis stooped over the dead and looked at his wounds? Who had done this? What enemy of Philip had fallen upon him with the fury of a tiger and left be-

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MATRIMONIAL PAPER OF DESCRIPTIONS and photos free, all [illegible] no fakes. Alpha Rice, Ch[illegible] find him the corpse of the great Burgundian.

If Philip had been the cause of his proscription, his fate was not to be lamented, but perchance after all he was innocent.

"[illegible] have we here, messire?" said a voice.

De Plessis was on his feet in an instant and was gazing at a man in the open doorway.

"Look for yourself," said he. "There lies the Duke of Burgundy."

The terrified man gave one look and fled. De Plessis did not follow.

In less than ten minutes all Paris seemed to know of the tragedy. The [illegible] of the crime spread like wildfire. [illegible]s hurried away to get rid of the crowd which was surrounding the house. All Paris seemed focusing in one direction.

Suddenly the gossiping of two old women stopped him. The King had been found unconscious in his chamber. The King was really dying.

If this was true, then the proscription would not be carried out that night. But if he lived, if he became himself again, the fatal order would be executed. De Plessis hastened home.

"Thank Heaven!" cried a voice, as he opened the door, and the next moment Odette was in his arms.

"This is the day of death!" she cried, [illegible]cling him with her arms. "The King is dying."

"What if he comes out of his swoon and my name is not on the list?"

"Your name has been restored. Rene heard the grand marshal read the list."

De Plessis looked down into her face, but did not speak.

"The order is to be enforced at midnight," Odette went on. "Everything is ready. You must go."

A feeling of mingled hardihood and revulsion rose in De Plessis' throat.

"I have answered you, love," said he, [illegible]nly. "I will not play coward."

"But I can never go back with you to Burgundy if the order is carried out."

The words of the fair Burgundian sank deep into De Plessis' heart.

"You came to the King!" he said harshly. "At the suggestion of Duke Philip you came to the palace of sin and shame."

Her eyes flashed and her cheeks reddened.

"And if I left it now I would do so as pure as the day I first entered it."

De Plessis looked down into the eyes swimming in tears and drew Odette closer to his breast.

"Forgive me. I know. You are still the pure lily of old Burgundy in spite of your surroundings."

"Before Heaven I am, Arnace!"

"Never more will I doubt. But I can[illegible]. I will not stain my escutcheon [illegible] playing the coward."

"The Duke of Burgundy is past hate [illegible] treason."

"[illegible] heard that on the street."

"[illegible] your sake, love," said De Plessis. "I will keep in hiding tonight. I will be where the King's executioners cannot find me."

"They will comb all Paris for every [illegible]ed one," cried Odette.

"But will they look for me in the house of the Devil's Sister? No, no, they will not."

"Then let that be your hiding-place. This is the King's last night on earth. I have just seen him. He will cease to reign before another sunrise."

"God rest his soul!"

"It gladdens my heart to hear you say that, Arnace. He has been good to me. I have brought some sunshine into his life, and he knows it."

"[illegible]d the Queen?"

"Her heart will flutter with joy when the King is dead. Then she may find her accursed jewels of Jezebel."

They stood apart now looking into each other's eyes. To De Plessis Odette had never looked so lovely. He remem[illegible]ed when he used to put the roses of [illegible]undy in her hair and have her kiss [illegible] the gift. But royalty had found her. It had brought her to Paris from the sunny hills far away, and planted her in the palace, where intrigue never stilled its tongue, and where she had [illegible]r forgotten the rambles along the [illegible]undian brooklets.

"You will be with the King tonight?" [illegible] suddenly asked.

"I will be there."

"If he dies before midnight [illegible] order [illegible]ed out?"

[illegible] cried De Plessis. "Death may overtake Charles before the appointed hour."

"[illegible] know not when the last moment [illegible]"

[illegible] replied De Plessis, "the fate of nations hangs on a [illegible]"

[illegible] embraced her again and let her [illegible]

[illegible] back into his chair she [illegible] make ready for his de[illegible]. She saw him place her portrait [illegible] heart and then examine the [illegible]ich had been his friend in more [illegible] one wild scuffle.

"[illegible]o you go down first," [illegible] no one see us depart together."

Odette obeyed, and then De Plessis was alone. He took one last sur[illegible] of the room and turned [illegible]

"How will the old hag receive me?" he thought, when he was once more on the street. "Will she seek to poniard me for slaying her ape? It's a chance, and for Odette I take it."

It was a hurried walk to the little house which he had every cause to remember. It looked as dark and forbidding as ever. Into it he plunged and headlong up the squeaking stairway. He opened the door which he had opened before almost to his doom. The figure of the Devil's Sister rose before him.

"Did you do it, monsieur?" she cried, snatching a poniard from the table.

De Plessis paused speechless before her.

"Did you enter the great Duke's house and kill him like a common murderer?"

"There's no stain of his blood on my blade," answered De Plessis. "I am as free of that hideous crime as the babe unborn."

"Then that much for you, but what want ye here?"

"The King is dying."

"[illegible]"

"If he lives till midnight I will be dead, for he has issued a proscription."

"Which he should have done years ago!" cried the woman. "My house shall be your refuge. But upon whose hands is the blood of Philip of Burgundy?"

"Rumor hath it upon Orleans'."

"Say you so?" cried the Devil's Sister, leaping forward with the poniard in midair. "Then this avenging blade for the heart of Orleans!" and she stood before De Plessis like an avenging fiend of darkness.

CHAPTER XX.

A HUSH has fallen over Paris like that which follows the passing of a cyclone. A few clouds ride past the half-moon which had climbed into the vault of heaven, and the winds are still.

The King's Guards stand about the royal palace, where a like silence reigns, and the people gather in groups with eyes turned upon the great building. There are bell ringers at the bell ropes of the many cathedrals, and here and there are mounted men to carry abroad the news of the King's death.

The King is dying. The unfortunate madness which has made his life miserable has departed forever. It will no more rend soul and body. In his chamber on the great couch with its wonderful draperies he lies, the shadow of his former self, pale and hollow-eyed, looking now at one of those present and now at the other. A stillness like that which fills the streets is within. The royal physician with his hand on the fleeting pulse awaits the end.

Outside, on the steps of the palace, stands a man with a sword in his hand. He looks like a statue in the moonlight, for it will soon be his duty to cry out: "The King is dead! Long live the King!" and then the bells will toll and Paris breathe once more.

At the King's side kneels one who has brought into his life the only sunshine it has known for years. Now and then she glances from the white face to the clock and trembles. The Queen now and then turns from the King and glances at this young girl with a scowl which means future vengeance. Louis of Orleans stands beside the Queen.

Slowly the King turns to Odette and lightly passes his hand over her ringlets. As slowly he draws her head toward him and whispers something in her ear. The girl arises and crosses the room; her hand touches a concealed door in the wall, and it flies open. She puts her hand in and withdraws a silver casket. This she brings back and on her knees presents it to Queen Isabel. The Queen starts and glances at the immobile face of Orleans.

"He would not deceive me at this hour," she whispers. "The jewels of Jezebel are mine at last."

Hiding the box in her gown, she slips from the room and is gone.

The tapers in the death chamber seem to grow dimmer. The hour is at hand. Odette rises and places her hand on the King's forehead. The court doctor lets his hand drop from Charles' lips and nods slowly to the lookers on. It is all over!

Orleans seems to bound from the room. He speaks to the statue on the palace steps and then——

"The King is dead! Long live the King!" issues from the man's throat.

Odette is alone with the poor dead King. She looks at the clock and joy beams in her eyes. It is not yet midnight.

Orleans has turned back and is at the Queen's door.

As he opens it and steps inside, he halts and draws back with horror written on his face. In the middle of the floor is Queen Isabel, tossing up and down the jewels of Jezebel.

"They are my dolls, pretty things!" she cries, without noticing the Prince. "I shall ever love them, and when I have children I shall put them around their pretty necks! See how they laugh! Oh, you little babies. You shall all be kings and queens when you grow up. I am the mother of God and will see that no harm comes to you."

Orleans listens till his face deepens with the horror of the scene. The jewels of Jezebel have fulfilled the curse which had been set upon them in the ages past when Ahab in his wickedness harried the poor world. The Queen is mad! It is no sight for Orleans. The jewels of Jezebel have taken the light of sanity from her eyes, and never again will she know the beauty of reason.

Down the darkened hall into which he slips, trembling over what he has just seen, he comes in contact with the figure of a woman who had just leaped from beside the grayish wall.

"Louis of Orleans!" she cries. "I have found thee!"

At that moment he recalls the prophecy of the fortune teller who met him at the house of Duke Philip: "Beware the woman!"

Instinctively Orleans lays his hand on the hilt of his rapier.

"Out of my path!" cries he. "Out of my way, hag of hell, or I'll paint the carpet with your tainted blood."

Instead of obeying him the woman dashes at him with uplifted dagger, and ere he can strike there are two wounds in his breast.

"One for Duke Philip, my old lover, and one for the poor dead King!" peals from her throat, and when she disengages herself something dark, grotesque, and humanlike lies at the foot of the wall.

The woman—the Devil's Sister, once the Rose of Burgundy and Duke Philip's youthful love—plunges from the palace with the murderous blade over her head and shouts:

"The King is dead and Louis of Orleans has followed him to the shades of the Styx!" and in a moment she has disappeared.

All Paris seems to waken from its lethargy. It is Charles VII. now.

(Continued on Page 23)

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Some husbands would do almost anything to render their wives unspeakably happy.

When a man sneers at a woman's business ability he makes a noise like sour grapes.

Isn't it a shame that the highest praise a man ever gets comes out at his funeral?

When a man t[illegible] that he understands women [illegible] classed as [illegible] mark.

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The average man knows how to do another man's work better than he knows how to do his own

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After a man gets about so full he can make himself believe that others think he is perfectly sober

Nature cannot jump from winter to summer without a spring, nor from summer to winter without a fall.

When a young man tells a leap-year girl that he dreamed of her the night before it is up to her to propose or get out of the game

Home and Health

FASHION NOTES.

Paris is using many contrasting pipings.

Mouse color is a new shade, soft and becoming.

The coat of knee length is smartest for sport wear

Dancing frocks of white net are elaborately ruffled.

Patent, side-laced boots are more popular than ever

Fancy coats are usually made of silk with ruchings and cordings.

Ostrich feather tips of the tiniest type are among the prettiest of millinery decorations.

Satin pipings make a quaint trimming for the dress of georgette crepe

Lingerie now boasts of beaded trimming. There are dainty garments made of crepe de chine with panels of iridescent beads.

Many of the voile frocks are trimmed with narrow frills made of handkerchief linen, a piquant combination of materials that the summer girl is sure to like.

Wire, crinoline and featherbone are used to extend the skirts that flare at the hips. And when they do not flare at that point they are bound to make up for the negligence by an added flare at the bottom

NEEDLEWORK NOTES.

There is a practical cork bag that any housekeeper would appreciate. It would also make a valuable addition for the bazaar table. It is fashioned of a straight piece of material, cretonne, heavy crash, even, as in one case, from a strip of brocade, tho the other materials would be more serviceable. It is gathered at the top by silk cords thru a narrow casing, and on the ends of the cords as tassels dangle small corks to show the purpose of the bag and to give unique ornamentation. Probably the most appreciated part of the bag will be the corkscrew attached in tassel fashion to the bottom of the bag by means of a clasp like that on the end of a watch chain. The corkscrew will always be in place if snapped back to the bag after using.

A dancing bag, deep enough to hold slippers, gloves and vanity outfit, is of peach-pink pussy willow silk, drawn up at the top on pale blue ribbon, and lined with pale blue satin. There are two frills of lace, one near the bottom and one midway of the bag's length, each frill put on under a tiny line of fur

RECIPES.

CHICKEN CROQUETTES—Melt in a double boiler one tablespoonful of butter, and add the same amount of flour; when it is foamy stir in one-half cupful of cream,, and one-half cupful of chicken stock: stir constantly until smooth and thick, then season with salt and pepper to taste, remove from the stove, and stir in two well-beaten eggs and one pint of chopped, cooked chicken. When the mixture is cold, form into egg-shaped croquettes, and fry a golden brown in deep fat. These are pretty served in nests made out of yellow celery tops.

ESCALLOPED LAMB.—A layer of cold boiled potatoes sliced, a layer of chopped lamb, butter, pepper and salt, then potatoes and lamb until the dish is full. Pour over hot milk and bake in oven. This makes a very nice dish for supper on a cold night. Even potatoes escalloped with cut meat are very good, but stir in a little flour with the milk so it will not be thin. Did you ever toast potatoes? Slice cold boiled potatoes lengthwise so the slices may be handled better and put them on the toast iron. It takes longer to toast them than it does bread because they are damp. Let them brown and eat them hot with butter and salt. You can also make a very nice pea soup from your lamb bone after the meat is off. Two quarts cold water, one cup split peas, one onion, celery leaves or celery seed, salt and pepper and the lamb bone. Cook half a day slowly, then mash the peas thru a strainer and wet up one tablespoon of flour and stir into the soup; then repeat, and I think you will find this a very palatable supper dish

FOR THE HOUSEWIFE.

To remove paint from clothing saturate the spots two or three times with equal parts of ammonia and turpentine, and then wash with soapsuds.

Colored handkerchiefs should be soaked in cold water for a short time before they are washed. This will prevent the colors from running or fading.

Milk will burn easily, but this can be rectified in the following way: Pour the boiling milk into a clean pitcher and stand in a basin of cold water until cool.

In ironing a garment on which hooks are sewed, care should be taken not to close the hooks. You can prevent this by placing flannel or anything soft beneath the hooks.

It is economical after using a bowl of old starch to let it settle. Then pour off the water and dry the starch in the oven at night. It will be reduced to a cake and can be used again.

A black frock may be freshened by sponging it with alcohol mixed with water in the proportion of one part alcohol to three of water. The garment should be sponged on the right side, but ironed on the wrong.

Having a small kitchen and no place to put the ironing board out of sight, one woman made a bag of pretty cretonne, the length of and as wide as the widest part of the board, with a casing and a draw string in the top. When the week's ironing is finished, it takes but a moment to slip the board into its case, draw up the string, tie and hang upon a convenient rail behind the kitchen door; which not only adds to the neatness of the room, but keeps the covering of the board free from soil and dust

How Nuxated Iron Helped Me To Whip Frank Moran

Jess Willard Tells Secret of His Easy Victory. Also reveals hitherto untold secret of his great triumph over Jack Johnson; Says

IRON IS GREATEST OF ALL STRENGTH BUILDERS

Ordinary Nuxated Iron will often increase the strength and endurance of delicate, nervous folks 200 per cent. in two weeks time.

I consider that plenty of iron in my blood is the secret of my great strength, power and endurance.

Jess Willard

SPECIAL NOTE.—Dr. E. Sauer, a well known physician who has studied widely in both this country and Europe, has been specially employed to make a thorough investigation into the real secret of the great strength, power and endurance of Jess Willard, and the marvelous value of nuxated iron as a strength builder

NEW YORK.—Upon being interviewed at his apartment in the Colonial Hotel, Mr. Willard said: "Yes, I have a chemist with me to study the value of different foods and products as to their power to produce great strength and endurance, both of which are so necessary in the prize ring. On his recommendation I have often taken nuxated iron and I have particularly advocated the free use of iron by all those who wish to obtain great physical and mental power. Without it I am sure that I should never have been able to whip Jack Johnson so completely and easily as I did, and while training for my bout with Frank Moran, I regularly took nuxated iron, and I am certain that it was a most important factor in my winning so easily." Continuing Dr. Sauer said, "Mr. Willard's case is only one of hundreds which I could cite from my own personal experience which proves conclusively the astonishing power of nuxated iron to restore strength and vitality even in most complicated chronic conditions.

Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old, and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with the blood pressure of a boy of 20 and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man: in fact a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret he said was taking iron—nuxated iron had filled him with renewed life. At 30 he was in bad health, at 46 careworn and nearly all in. Now at 50 a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth. As I have said a hundred times over, iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If people would only throw away patent medicines and nauseous concoctions and take simple nuxated iron, I am convinced that the lives of thousands of persons might be saved, who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, consumption, kidney, liver and heart trouble, etc. The real and true cause which started their diseases was nothing more nor less than a weakened condition brought on by lack of iron in the blood. Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see for yourself how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous run-down people who were ailing all the while, double their strength and endurance and entirely get rid of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated like nuxated iron if you want it to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless.

Many an athlete or prize fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray, while many another has gone to inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron.—E. Sauer, M. D.

NOTE.—Nuxated [illegible] recommended above by Dr. S[illegible] not a [illegible] medicine nor se[illegible] but one which is [illegible] prescribed [illegible] physicians everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is [illegible] does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy, in nearly all forms of indigestion, as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated Iron that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron and [illegible] four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all druggists.

Black Horse Ben

Or, Liberty's Lone Scout

By Capt. Jack Judson

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CHAPTER VII

YES, the room in which Black Horse Ben had been confined was empty. Colonel Tarleton stared aghast with the breathless Tories at his heels The lone scout of the Peedee had escaped in some manner, and when the astonished men had recovered their senses they began to investigate.

"I see," suddenly cried Tarleton, stooping over a loose board in the floor. "I have found the loophole."

All gathered about him.

"He must be hiding in the cellar!" exclaimed one of the Tories.

"I rather think not, sir," said the British officer. "If the boy got into the cellar you may be sure he didn't remain there long. He is off again."

"But not with his horse."

"No, Sergeant DeKay has the animal and has promised to take good care of him."

The cellar was next searched, and it was found that a narrow window which led into the open had been tampered with, and therefore the hunt in that direction was abandoned.

"You'll have to go back without seeing the young Rebel punished," remarked Tarleton to the disappointed crowd. "Some other time you may have the satisfaction of seeing Black Horse Ben stretch hemp."

The house was soon in possession of the black woman, who did not seem at all sorry that the young captive had made his escape.

Let us return and see what had become of the lone scout of liberty.

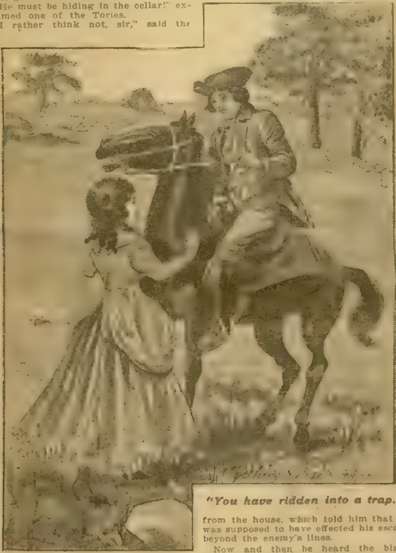
Ben had resolved never to be brought before Tarleton's court, and had cast about for an avenue of freedom. It was not long before he discovered that one of the planks of the floor was loose, and he pried it up far enough to let him get a look into the dark cellar beneath. His heart took a joyful leap at the apparent prospect before him. What was in the old cellar he did not know, but the risk did not deter him.

After some deliberation [illegible] himself thru the opening and [illegible] a few feet, alighting on a hard [illegible] The window thru which he could see the stars offered a way to liberty, but he turned from it after a short spell, and opened a door which led to a stairway

The house was still, and Lucia, the slave woman, was evidently asleep. He moved softly up the steps, and at last found a lonely attic which gave evidences of being seldom visited

"The very place for a hide-out!" he exclaimed. "They will never think of looking for me in the house, and I can lie here all day and give them the slip at night."

A window in the attic looked out upon the British camp, and he noted the movement of the dragoons The day showed him everything, and beating down the hunger that assailed him, he stuck to his post like a hero. He could see that the guards had been removed from the house, which told him that he was supposed to have effected his escape beyond the enemy's lines.



"You have ridden into a trap."

Now and then he heard the black woman singing a plantation melody, as she proceeded with her daily work, and at the proper hour Tarleton entered the house for his dinner.

When evening came he saw the vedettes ride from the camp to ward off an attack from General Marion. All at once a cry welled from his throat.

"They've got Comet sure enough!" he exclaimed. "The horse has got a new master, but he shall not carry a dragoon very long if I can help it."

The rider of the black horse was Ormont DeKay, the young trooper who had prevented Gilford Gross from punishing his ward Vera for not proposing a toast to King George.

Ben's eyes followed Comet and his rider, and noticed that DeKay took a certain direction.

"Now for the real escape," he said to himself. "I must have Comet back, or lose my life in getting him."

When night had fairly come he opened a window in the attic, and after crawling over a sloping roof, reached the ground without accident. Looking carefully around he hurried off in the direction taken by DeKay, and was soon beyond the limits of the British camp.

Fortune seemed to favor him, for after a long run he paused suddenly, and not far from him, outlined against the starry heavens, he saw a man holding the reins of a horse.

[illegible]ow for my old companion!" he ejaculated

With the noiseless movements of an Indian brave he crept upon the [illegible] from behind. His movements were [illegible] but success required the utmost caution, and in a few minutes he was within [illegible] of the picket. If Comet should [illegible] and whinny he was lost [illegible] the figure of Black Horse [illegible] ground [illegible] d thrown hi[illegible] man, bearing him to the ground [illegible] he could defend himself

Ben was stout and active for his [illegible] and a full match for DeKay. He held [illegible]ner firmly to the ground, and [illegible] as he looked into his face

"I'm not going to harm you," he said to the wondering man "I wouldn't take your life for all the world. I want my horse."

With the last word he got upon his [illegible] at the same time taking possession of the dragoon's pistol, which was silver-mounted and a beautiful weapon

"Don't rob me of my weapon," pleaded the dragoon. "It was a present from a lass in England."

"You shall not be robbed for long," replied Ben.

"I know who you are," responded [illegible] I admire you for your [illegible] you are a Rebel. You [illegible] Mistress Vera, I suppose"

"[illegible]t I do, and a better girl does not [illegible] in Carolina."

"You are right. I had the satisfaction of preventing old Gross from chastising her not long ago because she wouldn't drink the King's health."

"Good! I begin to like you for that," exclaimed Ben, with a bow. "You are the sort of enemy I like to meet.

The youth moved toward the black horse, which by this time had recognized his master. DeKay looked on amazed.

"I'll drop your pistol a little farther down the road," Ben continued. "I wouldn't take it with me for the world."

DeKay held out his hand

"I trust we are not real enemies," he said, with considerable feeling. "We may meet again."

It was now an agile vault into the saddle, and the boy gathered up the reins.

"Good night," said he, looking down at DeKay. "I thank you for baffling old Gross' designs"

A word to Comet, and once more the two companions were flying down the road

A few yards from the starting point Ben dropped the pistol and was soon out of sight. His escape had been effected by his own wits, and he was proud to be once more in the old saddle, while Comet seemed as much pleased as his master.

It was at the breaking of the new day that Ormont DeKay turned back toward camp. He was not afoot and over his face played an amused smile. Con[illegible]ing his ill luck as well as he could, he reported that the black horse had got away from him, despite his vigilance, and was evidently on his way to old haunts

Colonel Tarleton received the report in silence.

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It states editorially
"Symptoms of arsenical poisoning are very similar to those of cholera infantum. Undoubtedly a number of cases of cholera infantum were really cases of arsenical poisoning, but death, if occurring, was attributed to cholera infantum.
"We repeat, arsenical fly destroying devices are dangerous and should be abolished. Health officials should become aroused to prevent further loss of life from their source. Our Michigan Legislature, this last session, passed a law regulating the sale of poisonous fly papers."
THE O. & W. THUM CO., Grand Rapids, Mich. (78)

"Well," he said at last, "we'll get the boy some other time. He's as slippery as an eel, but the pitcher that goes often to the well is finally broken."

It was a long ride thru the night, and when it ended Ben, the liberty boy, was in General Marion's camp. The famous Swamp Fox received him with unfeigned delight, and listened eagerly to the story of his adventures.

Ben imparted some news which Marion was glad to get.

"I will be ready for Colonel Tarleton when he comes," said he. "I have been expecting a raid by the enemy, and my men will give a good account of themselves when it comes."

"I'd like to have a word with Vera," thought Ben, as he rode away.

To his surprise, he discovered as he approached the girl's home a figure in an adjacent field.

"I'm in grand luck!" he exclaimed, riding toward her, and then he called her name.

Vera came running toward him, her face full of fear, and when she halted at his side she exclaimed excitedly:

"The dragoons are just over the hill yonder! You have ridden into a trap! Quick! There they are now, and worst of all, they have spied you."

It required but one look on Ben's part to confirm Vera's words. The dragoons, five of them, were galloping toward him.

"Good-by!" cried Ben. "It's another ride for life!" and he was off like the wind.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE young partisan of the Carolinas had been warned by Vera in the nick of time. The five dragoons set up cries of victory as they spurred in pursuit of him, and soon the race for life became hot and furious.

As for Black Horse Ben, he was proud of his mount, for he knew that Comet was possessed of the genuine mettle, and that no horse had ever distanced him. He held to the saddle like the good rider he was, and knowing the country thruout, he was not likely to become entangled by the network of roads.

It was a beautiful morning for a chase, for the sun, already gilding the peaks of the eastern hills, was showering the landscape with its effulgence, and Ben could see far ahead.

When he looked back he saw the dragoons strung out behind him, their uniforms showing gaudily and their plumes streaming in the wind. They had good steeds, as well as did the boy whom they pursued, and the dust flew from beneath the hoofs of the flying animals.

Ben, as we know, was totally unarmed, and therefore in a poor plight for defense should the enemy overtake him, but he relied on his mount and tried to forget that he had no weapons. For five miles the pursuit was maintained with zeal. The efforts of the enemy were unabated.

Suddenly, as the youth turned an abrupt bend in the narrow road, he almost collided with a man sitting on a horse. This individual wore no uniform, but was attired in the homespun garb of a citizen. His horse reared at sight of Ben on the black, and before he could retreat the boy was alongside.

"You've got a good pistol there!" cried the lone scout of liberty, reaching for the weapon which had caught his eye. "I must have it, Master Finley——"

The act of snatching the pistol from its owner broke the sentence, and a thrill went thru every fiber as Ben realized that once more he was armed.

The halt of several seconds was against Comet's rider. It enabled the troopers to come into view. There was a shout on their part, and when Ben turned once more he had the foremost fellow at his very heels.

"Surrender!" rent the air, but it only tightened Ben's grip on the rein, and he urged the black to more speed

The dragoon was also on his mettle, and he struck his spurs deep into the sides of his foamy animal and at the same time drew his pistol. It was a fair shot for a steady hand, and the Briton fired point-blank at the figure flying before him. A bullet whistled past the youth's head, taking with it a lock of hair.

"An empty pistol!" flashed across Ben's mind. "It is my time to stop the foe."

He turned in the saddle and saw the trooper within a few feet of him. The dragoon saw his purpose when too late. He threw himself forward on his horse's neck, but a trifle too late. The weapon that covered him spat out its lead, and the man, with a broken shoulder, reeled in the saddle and tumbled to the ground. The other troopers came up in a moment, and all gathered around the man on the ground

The black horse was once more plunging away, his flanks white with foam and his ire uppermost. But the chase had ended. Ben drew rein a mile from the scene of the shooting and looked back. No one was in sight.

"It wasn't such a bad adventure, after all," said he, stroking the heated neck of his steed. "I can always rely on you, old fellow. You have no more love for a redcoat than I have, and some time we'll both be free under the banner of Washington."

Half an hour later the young ranger pulled up in front of a small farmhouse and saw the door open at his shout.

A little man with a face almost like a mummy's appeared in the doorway and looked at the boy.

"Carry me back to old Virginny!" cried he, "if it ain't the boy and the black. See here! You'll get me into trouble if they catch us together."

"I don't intend to tarry, Master Platt," laughed Ben. "I've just had a bout with some of Tarleton's riders, but Comet was too much for them."

"Eh? Hunted by the redcoats? Well, you'd better move on, for it hasn't been ten minutes since they've been here."

"How many?"

"Six."

"What did they want?"

"You, I suspect."

"Well, I'm here," smiled Ben. "How are things about here, Master Platt?"

"Bad enough, but please move on."

"In a moment. Will you please hand me your powderhorn and bullet bag?"

"They'd hang me if I did."

"Our necks are all in the halter, anyhow," was the reply. "I want the ammunition. Be quick about it."

The little man ran back into the house and came out with the desired articles, which Ben took possession of. He was off again this time, with more confidence, for he now was really armed against the enemy.

"The goal will soon be reached," he said to himself. "The redcoats will have to wait a while before they catch me."

He did not draw rein again till he found another house, into which he was invited. His horse was taken to the stable, and he seated himself in an armchair to tell his story to a patriotic woman of 40.

"You're safe now," said she, with a reassuring smile. "It would have been the end of you had the redcoats caught you."

"I fancy they wouldn't have offered me a commission in their army," responded Ben, grimly.

"I should reckon not, boy."

In a short time a tempting meal was placed on the table, and the young patriot fell to with a zeal which attested his wants.

While he ate he told in brief sentences the story of his adventures, and his hostess listened breathlessly to every word that fell from his lips.

"Listen," suddenly said the woman, bending over the boy. "I have a guest in the house."

"Now?"

"Right now," was the answer.

"Where is he?"

"I've hidden him in the attic," and the speaker glanced toward a stairway.

Ben was almost incredulous.

"What is he like?" he asked.

"He's one of Tarleton's troopers. He was chased by the Rebels, as they call our folks, and was wounded. I couldn't help taking him in, you know."

"That was right. Is he badly hurt?"

"Shot thru the right leg, and could just crawl to the door and beg me to hide him."

Black Horse Ben rose from the table with a look at the woman.

"I must have a look at him," he said.

"But he might recognize you!"

"Never mind the recognition," smiled the youth. "I'll stand good for what happens."

The boy ranger opened the stair door and was soon on the creaking flight. As he elevated his head above the floor above and was getting a survey of the little room, he found a cocked pistol thrust into his face. A British soldier lying on a pallet was behind the menacing firearm, and Ben saw a pair of savage eyes.

"You Rebels are not going to take me alive," grated the redcoat. "I'm not helpless, as you see, tho badly wounded."

"I don't want to take you," answered Ben. "Who are you?"

"Benedict Nolan of the Royal Dragoons. And you?"

"Black Horse Ben of the American forces."

"We've been looking for you," said the man. "I ran into a lot of Marion's bobtail soldiers, and they gave me a bullet in the leg. But for the good

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woman taking me in I would not be here to draw my breath."

The pistol had fallen to the redcoat's side and his fierce look had departed. The next moment Ben heard the stair door open and a voice sent an electric thrill thru every nerve.

"The redcoats are coming!" cried the woman below. "Get out by the window and race for the stable. The house will hide you for a while."

Ben was instantly on his feet. He sprang to the window and looked out. The little stable was not more than twenty yards away. He felt his heart in his throat. Was he to be retaken at last?

CHAPTER IX.

THE varying fortunes that had been a part of Black Horse Ben's life for months were destined to favor him again. He was no sooner out of the house than he sprinted to the stable, the house shielding his movements, and in a little while he led Comet out thru a rear door and was off once more. The dragoons rode up to the house and searched it, but without success. The youth had escaped them.

This time Ben did not draw rein till he was in General Greene's encampment, where he was safe. Greene could hardly credit the boy's story, but his honesty convinced him that he spoke the truth, and the American general was delighted to know that the young partisan had outwitted both Tory and Briton.

The following night Ben was surprised to be confronted by General Greene, whose face wore an anxious expression.

"I have had no news from Marion for three days," said he. "He is somewhere below us and not far from Tarleton's army, and I am in great fear that he is in dire danger."

Ben instinctively knew what was coming.

"Would you mind scouting in direction of Marion's camp?' asked Greene.

"I am always at your service, General," was the prompt reply.

"Here is a message to General Marion. You see I have wrapped it in tin foil so that you can chew it up in case you get into deep water. You will read the message first, and remember as much of it as you can."

"Yes, sir,"

Ben took the dispatch and concealed it on his person. Ten minutes later he had mounted the black horse and was beyond the confines of the American camp. He was going back into the danger net, but as he was ready to take any risk for the cause he served, he did not shirk the responsibility. He believed that it was twenty miles to Marion's camp, and much of the route led thru the enemy's country.

It was a splendid night. The sky was gemmed with stars and erelong a full moon would rise to light him on his way. In truth, he would have preferred no moon at all, for he knew the roads quite well, and, seated firmly in the saddle and well armed, he was confident that he could take care of himself.

It was evident that the scouting parties of British were really looking for him, determined to put an end to his work, and he felt that they would leave no stone unturned to effect his capture.

As he cantered down the winding road, which was bordered on both sides by dense forests of pines, he used his eyes with the keenness of a night hawk. Ten miles had been left behind him without incident when he was startled by a cry that thrilled him to the quick. He drew rein and inclined his head to the left.

"Help! Help!" rang out clearly on the night air.

The appeal seemed to come from a little clearing in the forest, and drawing his pistol, Black Horse Ben rode in that direction. It was not far to the clearing where he knew stood a commonplace house in which lived a patriot family consisting of man and wife.

Voices assailed his ears as he neared the spot, and when he halted he looked down upon a moonlit scene that sent his heart into his throat. An old couple were being dragged from the house by a lot of Tories who filled the night with all sorts of threats of vengeance.

"Pull the old Rebels up without ceremony!" cried the leader of the pack. "They've served their hated cause long enough. What they need is a little hemp in the King's name."

It was evident that murder was about to be done, and Ben leaned forward to get a good view of the situation.

"It's outrageous," he exclaimed to himself. "Those brutes of Tories are at their usual game, and if I can help it they shall not succeed."

"Help! Help!" again cried the frightened woman, but a brutal hand was clapped over her mouth and her further cries suppressed.

All this was too much for the boy patriot of the Peedee. Speaking sharply to Comet, he dashed forward, and in a moment, to the astonishment of the would-be murderers, he was right in their midst.

"Unhand those people!" he shouted into the Tories' ears. "You are up to your usual rascality!"

The four men drew back and stared at the boy on the black horse.

"Who are you?' stammered one of the men.

"Never mind. We are not talking about identity now," answered Ben. "A Tory is the meanest thing on earth. Get away from here," and his look emphasized his words in a manner that made cheeks blanch among the desperate gang.

They saw the pistol thrust into their very faces, and fell back doggedly, muttering curses all the time, as Ben ordered them to throw away their arms.

"Be quick about it," said he. "I am not going to play with you scoundrels."

Four pistols were thrown to the ground at the feet of the old couple.

"Now make off, and bless your stars that none of you have a bullet in your heads!" the youth went on. "I will answer your question now. I am Black Horse Ben."

"I—thought—so," was the reply. "Some time we'll stretch your neck a few inches and——"

"You can't skin a rabbit till you have caught him," laughed the boy. "And some rabbits are mighty hard to catch."

Beaten out of their vengeance, the Tories sneaked away, and when the last one had disappeared, Ben turned to the old couple, who were overwhelming him with thanks.

Once more the black horse was carrying his fearless rider down the road.

"Halt!"

The boy halted and looked ahead. The sight appalled him.

He had ridden upon a horseman who had apparently risen out of the ground, and the muzzle of a pistol almost touched his head. For a moment there was silence, and then the voice of the stranger broke it.

"I'll get the ten pounds and will not have to divide with any one!" exclaimed the man, in exultant tones. "Taking Black Horse Ben single-handed is quite a feather in one's cap."

There was no reply.

"Now, sir, hand over your weapon and come alongside," was the next command.

There was nothing left for the boy but obedience. He shut his teeth hard and complied, but there was a gleam in his eyes that boded his captor no good.

Captive and captor went down the road side by side, the man clutching Comet's bridle with one hand. Ben could see that he was a dragoon, a big formidable-looking fellow from whom he could expect no mercy.

"You gave Colonel Tarleton a slip good enough," suddenly laughed the trooper. "I like your bravery, but despise your cause."

"A better cause than mine was never fought for," proudly replied the boy. "But argument will never fix up things between you and me."

All the time Ben was narrowly watching his captor.'

"Am I going back to Tarleton?" he suddenly asked.

"Well, you don't think you're on the road to the Rebel camp?" was the grinning retort.

"Oh, my foot!" suddenly cried Ben. "If I had that cobbler who fixed my shoes last week I'd give him what Paddy gave the drum. He left a nail that is torturing me nigh unto death."

The dragoon looked suspicious.

"I'm going to take the shoe off," continued the boy, as he leaned to one side.

"Well, be quick about it," was the harsh rejoinder.

The young patriot unlaced the shoe and rose suddenly in the saddle. The next instant, with a sweeping blow, he brought the heavy hobnailed shoe down across the trooper's face, causing him to reel in the saddle.

One blow was not enough. Again and again with all the strength he could command Ben's shoe did its work, but ere the dragoon toppled from his horse, he grappled with his antagonist, and both went to the ground together.

"If I can't take you alive to Tarleton," hissed the infuriated soldier, "I can strangle you and take you there dead!"

Ben knew that he meant every word he said, for the next instant a giant hand was at his throat and he felt his breath leaving his body.

(Continued next week.)

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The Fairy Corner

A RHYME OF LITTLE GIRLS.

Prithee tell me, don't you think
Little girls are dearest
With their cheeks of tempting pink,
And their eyes the clearest?
Don't you know that they are best
And of all the loveliest?

Of all girls with roguish ways
They are surely truest;
Sunshine gleams thru all their days,
They see skies the bluest,
And they wear a diadem
Summer has bestowed on them.

Lydia doesn't care a cent
For the newest dances,
She is not on flirting bent,
Has no killing glances,
But without the slightest art
She has captured many a heart.

Older sisters cut her dead,
Little sisters never;
They don't giggle when they've said
Something very clever—
They just get behind a chair,
Frowning, smiling at you there.

Florence, Lydia, Margaret,
Or a gentle Mary,
They form friendship, that, once set,
Never more can vary—
Stanch young friends they are and true,
Always clinging close to you.

Buds must into blossoms blow,
(Morn so early leaves us!)
Maids must into women grow,
(There's the thing that grieves us!)
Psyche knots of flying curls,
That's good-by to little girls.
—Meredith Nicholson.

JAMES II.

Not all kings live happy and contented lives. James II., of England, was most unhappy. When he was a little boy his father, King Charles I., was sent to prison. Three of the children, Elizabeth, Henry, and James, were kept in a nearby palace. The friends of the king were afraid that not only would he be beheaded but that the children might also meet the same fate. Once a week they were taken to the prison where their father was kept. They had dinner with him and then they played hide and seek until time for bed. The king slept and the children's keeper paid no attention to them. This time, the friends thought, would be the best time to have the little Prince James escape.

The valet of the children was at the head of the plot. One day he took the little Princess Elizabeth aside. That night they were all going to the prison to visit their father, and this friend said they must begin to play as usual after dinner, but James, after the first few times, must hide and then run away, down thru the hall, into the garden and then to the river edge, where friends awaited him. Elizabeth had to be brave and not let the keepers know that the prince had gone; in fact, she must go on playing as if he were there.

The night came, the children said good-by to one another quietly. Not a word was said about the plot. In the prison they had dinner with their father, the king, who knew nothing of the plan for the escape. Their keeper left them alone with their father, and the latter sat dozing in his chair. James was "it" first, while Henry and Elizabeth hid. Then, when it was quite dark in the garden, Elizabeth knew it was time for James to go.

"I shall be 'it' this time!" she cried, "and I will give you a long time to hide."

She closed her eyes and listened to the footsteps. She heard little Henry hide himself near by. James was walking quietly down the hall. No one heard him. He was gone—perhaps. She went on playing with Henry. They kept on the game, pretending James was playing with them.

In the meantime James had slipped from the garden down to the water's edge, where friends hurried him on to a boat. They dressed him in the clothes of a girl, and no one knew who he was. The ship sailed to Holland, where James' sister, the Princess Mary of Orange, awaited him. Then he was quite safe. Years afterward he returned home and became King James II. of England.

But who do you think was the bravest of all? Was it not Elizabeth, who played so well and did not let the keepers know her brother was not there?

MOZART.

Almost every famous musician has shown signs of his genius at an early age, but no one earlier than Mozart, the composer. He was only 3 when he began to take an interest in music. One day his father found him picking out the harmonious notes in the octaves on the piano. It was unusual for a baby of that age to have such a sensitive ear.

His father was a good musician and Mozart heard a great deal of music from his father's friends. These friends would come to the house to practice and little Mozart would sit quietly by and listen. But on one particular occasion it happened otherwise. A man, a well-known violinist of that day, brought some music he had composed. He and some of his friends were going to play the score for the first time. The composer played the first violin, the court trumpeter played the second violin and Mozart's father the bass. When they were all ready to begin they heard a queer noise coming from the corner of the sofa. And there was little Mozart crying bitterly because he had not been asked to play with them. He wanted to play second violin, he said.

"But, my child," the father said, "you have never had a lesson."

"I don't need lessons. I can play now," he sobbed. The friends laughed and persuaded the father to let Mozart try. So Mozart dried his tears and took his place. And strange to say, he played thru the entire score, which he had never seen before. His father was delighted, and his friends congratulated him, for they all knew then that the child would become a great musician.

Another time little Mozart showed his father and his friends another sign of his genius. The child would often play on the violin of a friend. One day this friend was at the house, but without his violin. Mozart picked up his own, played on it and then said to the musician, "Your violin is tuned about half a tone lower than mine." It was hard to believe the child, so the musician sent for his violin. And when it came they tested it and found the child had told them the truth.

By the time he was 8 years old he had written good compositions and had played at court. He was one of the greatest composers of his time.

CROQUET.

Almost every one supposes that croquet is a modern game, whereas its real origin is obscured by the dust of ages. For numberless years people entirely forgot about it, and so few played it that it might have joined the other games that have slipped into oblivion had it not been that the dwellers in a certain Irish county liked and continued to play it long after all other people had ceased.

Seeing a number of fishermen playing the game, some traveling Englishmen became interested and brought it back to Britain, where they soon made it popular. From England it found its way quickly to America and in a short time everybody was playing the game and talking of it as something entirely new and out of the ordinary. It soon had a large number of devotees and so many disputes arose over the fine points of the game that a national convention was called and a standard set of rules adopted. After a time the interest in the game waned so thoroly that it was supplanted by lawn tennis, golf and other outdoor pastimes, until now it is rarely that the game is played. Those who are still interested in it play a much more complicated game called roque.

The game can be traced back to the ancient Gauls. At this time it was called jeu de mail (game of mallet), and the grounds on which it was played became known as "mails," or malls, and hence the English word meaning a park.

A GREAT ADVANTAGE.

"Which would you rather have—two bags with three apples in each or three bags with two apples in each!"

That was the catch question a certain teacher put to her class.

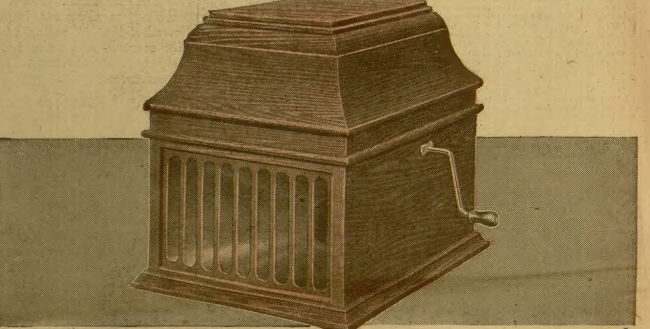
While most of them were still struggling with the intricacies of mental arithmetic, one lad waved his hand wildly.

"Yes, Frankie," asked the teacher.

"Please, miss," gasped the small boy, "I'd sooner have three bags with the two apples in each of 'em."

"But there's no difference. Why do you say that?"

"Because there'd be one more bag to burst," replied the boy, promptly.



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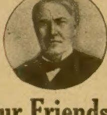

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The Jewels of Jezebel.

(Continued From Page 17.)

Paris loved the mad King; he was kind for all his misruling and his outbursts of anger, and Paris did not like the woman whom he had brought from Bavaria to be France's Queen. The jewels of Jezebel were the mad woman's playthings, and while they were laying Charles VI. with his ancestors she was calling them her children and coddling them like babies.

The grand marshal, when he heard of the King's death, took the order of arrest and tore it into fragments.

De Plessis, who had fallen half asleep in Odette's chair, heard shouts in the street and ran to the window.

"The King is dead! Long live the King!"

He drew out his watch and looked at it in the warm moonlight. It was not yet midnight. The door opened, and there stood Odette with wide-open arms.

"The poor mad King is dead, God rest his troubled soul!" cried the girl. "Now for the dear old Burgundian hills."

"Where enemies do not molest and love is green forever."

The moon went down upon a Paris under a new order of things.

There are things more beautiful than the buildings raised by the hand of man; there are scenes sweeter than those that spring from the human brain.

Some years after the King's death a young woman carrying a bucket of milk across a meadow in Burgundy, stopped to kiss a little child that held playfully to her dew-wet skirts.

"Mamma," pleaded the child, "tell me again about the jewels of Jezebel."

Odette set the milk in the grass, and taking the child in her lap, told her for the hundredth time the story of the accursed gems and of the mad King whom she had served so well.

"And, mamma, you made King Charles happy many times," said the child. "I love you all the more for that."

And the tears that came into Odette's eyes were like pearls.

The End.

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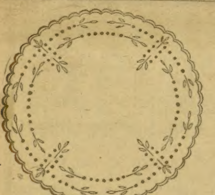

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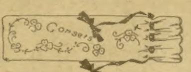

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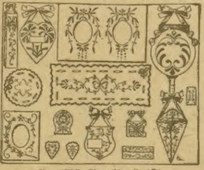

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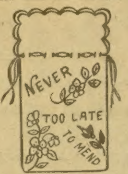
NO. 4028, MENDING BAG—Every woman needs an article of this kind, as there are always things that should be mended, and this receptacle will save you lots of time if you will use it. The material is white Irish linen and the design, which, as you see, includes the words, "Never too late to mend," is very appropriate and attractive when you have embroidered it. Four skeins of mercerized floss are included in this offer. Sent for a $1.00 subscription to either the Ledger or the Blade, or for $1.00 in subscriptions to both papers.



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Send postal today for full information how to get your Spring suit, made to measure, without a penny's cost. $30 to $40 would not buy a better one. Simply wear it, tell your friends where you got it—take their orders—and

MAKE $10 TO $15 A DAY

in your spare time. It is dead easy—you never saw a nobbier suit or a more stunning pattern, cut in very latest style. Your choice of 60 fabrics and 52 styles. Drop us a postal card for heavy pattern book, inside information about styles, self-measuring blanks, etc. DON'T WAIT. Mail Postal NOW.

We Pay Delivery Charges

Get ahead of other fellows—write this minute. A postal will do.

American Woolen Mills Co.
Dept. 506 CHICAGO

Relief For Rupture Without Operation

We Allow A 60-Day Test—Entirely At Our Own Risk—To Prove It

No longer any need to drag through life at the mercy of leg-strap and spring trusses. No reason in the world for letting them force you to undergo a dangerous operation.

Away With Leg-Strap and Spring Trusses

So far as we know, our guaranteed rupture holder is the only thing of any kind for rupture that you can get on 60 days' trial—the only thing we know of good enough to stand such a long and thorough test. It's the famous Cluthe Automatic Massaging Truss—made on an absolutely new principle—has 18 patented features. Self-adjusting. Does away with the misery of wearing belts, leg-straps and springs. Guaranteed to hold at all times—including when you are working, taking a bath, etc. Has cured in case after case that seemed hopeless.

Write for Free Book of Advice—Cloth-bound, 104 pages. Explains the dangers of operation. Shows just what's wrong with elastic and spring trusses, and why drugstores should no more be allowed to fit trusses than to perform operations. Exposes the humbugs—shows how old-fashioned worthless trusses are sold under false and misleading names. Tells all about the care and attention we give you. Endorsements from over 5000 people, including physicians. Write to-day—find out how you can prove every word we say by making a 60 day test without risking a penny.

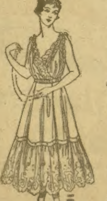
Box 25—Cluthe Co., 125 E. 23rd St., New York City

PATTERN COUPONS FREE!

Hundreds of Patterns to Select From

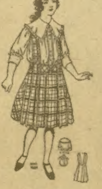
The great difficulty in making one's own garments is to get suitable patterns. Our women readers could make many pretty and useful things for themselves and their children if they could get well-made patterns. We have arranged to give our readers a pattern service unexcelled.

We have a splendid offer of the best and most fashionable patterns that can be produced by the greatest designers of New York and Paris, and what is more, these patterns will be within the reach of every one, and every one will have a wide selection to choose from. **Read our splendid offer below.**



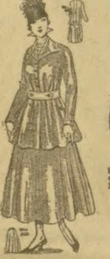
9057 Corset Cover. One size.

8951 Four-Piece Petticoat, 24 to 34 waist.



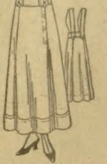
9041 Girl's Blouse or Guimpe, 10 to 14 years.

9039 Girl's Four-Piece Skirt, 10 to 14 years.

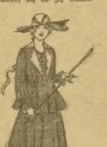


9044 Loose Coat, 34 to 42 bust.

9025 Three-Piece Skirt, with Yoke, 24 to 32 waist.

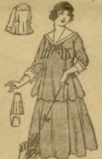


8669 Four-Piece Skirt, with or without Belt or Straps, Perforated for Pockets, 24 to 34 waist.



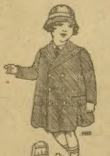
9048 Girl's Coat, 10 to 14 years.

9003 Girl's Four-Piece Skirt, 8 to 14 years.

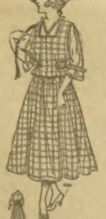


9024 Middy Blouse for Misses and Small Women 16 and 18 years.

9042 Two-Piece Skirt for Misses and Small Women, 16 and 18 years.



9062 Boy's Coat, 2 to 8 years.



9060 Dress with Over-Bodice for Misses and Small Women, 16 and 18 years.

HOW TO GET THE FREE PATTERNS

Here is the way we will do it: To every one who will send us one dollar for a year's subscription to the Chicago Ledger we will send absolutely free five pattern coupons. Each coupon will be good for one pattern and you can select the patterns from those illustrated in any issue of the Chicago Ledger. When you see a pattern that you like all you have to do is to send us a coupon and it will be sent to you at once. In this way you will have hundreds of patterns from which to pick the five that you will be entitled to, and you have all the time you need to pick out the ones you want.

These patterns are the best that can be made. Each pattern gives full directions for the cutting and making, with information as to the amount of cloth required, etc., so that any one can make any of the designs illustrated with no trouble at all. At the same time, they are so stylish and accurately cut that dressmakers and seamstresses all over the country will be quick to take advantage of this liberal offer. Some will subscribe for two years so they can get ten coupons. These designs are made by the best designers and modists of New York and Paris, and are up-to-the-minute in fashion and beauty.

We treat old and new customers alike on this splendid offer. If you are already a subscriber send in a dollar and we will send you the five pattern coupons and extend your subscription one year from the time it now expires.

To get these five coupons entitling you to five patterns, fill out the blank below and enclose it with one dollar for a year's subscription to the Chicago Ledger. Do this now—today! No woman should be without the Ledger's Pattern Coupon Book. Be among the thousands of women who will get these coupons.

............................CUT THIS OUT AND SEND TO US............................

THE CHICAGO LEDGER, 500 N. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Enclosed please find one dollar for a year's subscription to the Chicago Ledger. This entitles me to Five Pattern Coupons. **Canada Susscription Price $1.50 per year.**

NAME..
Street No.
or R. F. D..
Box............Town..
This is a...................Subscription. State.........................
(New or Renewal)

If you wish any pattern from those advertised in this issue, mark the number and size on the margin and we will retain a coupon for each pattern we send you when we send you the Coupon Book. (Order by size and number.) **Coupons good for six months.**

SPECIAL! TO READERS OF THE LEDGER !

WE are proud to present to the Readers and Friends of The Ledger, the VERY SPECIAL OFFER made in the following advertisement of the IMPORT MERCANTILE CO., of Kansas City, Mo. That their Liberal Offer is in good faith and will be carried out to the letter, is beyond question. The IMPORT is one of the Big Concerns that has helped reduce the high cost of living, and with their Liberal Credit System, has helped thousands of worthy people in all parts of the country. You should write for their Catalog and tell your friends to do so.

EASY TERMS

STARTLING ADVERTISING OFFER!

$3 Hat Free

With This Beautiful Hand-Tailored All Wool $20 BLUE SERGE Suit Cut to Only $15

and 6 Months to Pay!

To introduce the IMPORT'S Hand-Tailored "Classy Clothes for Classy People" to all the readers of the Ledger quickly, we make this Startling Offer!

K. C. Bank Presidents Endorse Import Mercantile Co.

We take very great pleasure in recommending the Import Mercantile Co., to the business public. The company has large financial resources with patrons everywhere throughout the United States. The owners of this firm are well and favorably known as men of energy and business integrity, and we believe them worthy of the fullest confidence of the public. (Signed)

J. R. DOMINICK, Pres.
Traders National Bank
W. T. KEMPER, Pres.
Commerce Trust Co.

WE want the opportunity to mould this elegant **Blue Serge Suit** to your own form and your own measurements and send it to you subject to your own inspection and approval! When it comes we want you to try it on, show it to your friends and in every way compare it with any $20.00 suit you've ever owned or ever saw and if not superior in every way, send it back at our expense.

This is mighty strong talk but we have the goods. We know. You don't know and that is the reason we are anxious for the opportunity to convince you of the entire truth of our statements. The IMPORT has thousands of enthusiastic customers among the best dressers throughout the country—they've been with us for years—fat men, slim men, young men, old men, all shapes and sizes and the more peculiar and the more particular, the better it suits The IMPORT.

Import Mercantile Co
Kansas City Mo
Your Credit is Good!

Send No Money. $2.00 a Month After You are Shown!

The Import's Home Store is in Kansas City, Mo. Read what the Banks say about us in this Ad. For years and years, it has been the Import's policy to first "show people" before any money is paid. That's why we say now and to you—"Send No Money" but sit right down **now** and write for our Catalog and Samples of cloth and measuring blanks. The Import's Easy Payment Plan is plain and very simple. There's no red tape, no interest, no security, no strings on our offer and no publicity—just common everyday honesty among everyday people whose inborn policy is to live and let live. We know if we get you for a customer once, you'll stick with us. We couldn't drive you away with a club. We are not stingy and we know you'll find it to your interest to do so. That's why we say you'll stick if you try us once and that's why we make you this startling offer to save you $5 on this fine, hand-tailored Blue Serge Suit and throw you in a fine $3 hat for good measure.

☛ Write for FREE CATALOG! Because We Mean What We Say

—and we say what we mean! The Import is just the kind of a House you need and have been looking for. Keep your money in your pocket but this minute sign your name and address to Coupon at right and mail to us for Catalog and Sample Fabrics. **We guarantee to place upon your back, the best suit bargain you ever saw** and we don't ask you to pay cash either. You would gain nothing if you did, because The Import's price is the same whether you pay cash or buy on easy payments, so you can always rest assured that **the price you pay is exactly the same as the richest man in the country would have to pay.**

IMPORT MERCANTILE CO., Dept. 75 Kansas City, Mo.

FREE CATALOG COUPON.

Import Mercantile Co.
Dept. 75 Kansas City, Mo.

Please mail me Free Catalog and Sample Fabrics—also particulars of your Special Advertising offer of $20 Blue Serge Suit for $15 and $3 Hat FREE—all on Easy Terms.

NAME ....
TOWN..............................
STATE ....
R.F.D. OR ST. NO..............................